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# THE LIFE OF THE LORD JESUS

BY

MRS. LOUISE SEYMOUR HOUGHTON  
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AN AID TO THE STUDY  
OF  
THE GOSPEL HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST



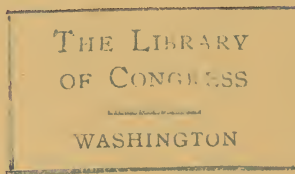
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## PUBLISHER'S PREFACE.

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One of the fundamental principles of The Bible Study Union is that Sunday-school lesson helps should never be of such a character as to take the place of the personal study of the Bible itself in the preparation of the lesson. The tendency of helps which do this is to drive the Bible out of the Sunday-school, and to make the opinions of men about the Bible, rather than the Bible itself, the basis of instruction. One evil result of such helps appears in the practical disuse of the Bible in many Sunday-school classes at the present time. For use in the Sunday-school, the Bible without note or comment is much better than the best possible notes and comments without the Bible.

It is equally true, as stated by the author of The Bible Study Union Lessons in The Andover Review for October, 1892, that "we need all the help we can get in studying the Bible; we cannot have too much of it, provided it is *really* help;" that is, if it is of such a character that it helps to a better understanding of the sacred text, but does not take the place of that text as the basis of study. Much such help can be gathered from historical and geographical works, from commentaries on the gospels, and from the various lives of Christ, of which we now have such rich abundance. The Manual, published in connection with The Bible Study Union Lessons, is designed to afford a large measure of such help.

It is because the accompanying Life of the Lord Jesus, by Mrs. Houghton, is of this character that we gladly republish it from the columns of THE EVANGELIST as revised, and to a large extent rewritten, by herself, for use in connection with the lessons on The Gospel History of Jesus Christ. Each chapter takes up the Scripture material of one lesson and throws much light on its meaning, as well as upon its circumstances and surroundings. It cannot fail

to be very useful to any who wish for a better understanding of the life of the Lord Jesus, and especially to those who study His life in the lessons of The Bible Study Union.

We wish particularly to call attention to Mrs. Houghton's remark, in the author's preface, that she alone is responsible for the statement and teachings of this volume. We do this in justice both to the editors of The Bible Study Union Lessons, and to the Lesson Committee of The Bible Study Union.

THE BIBLE STUDY PUBLISHING CO.

Boston, November, 1895.



## AUTHOR'S PREFACE.

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The following studies were originally prepared in connection with the Blakeslee Lessons of The Bible Study Union, for the Sunday-school department of THE EVANGELIST. They have been carefully revised and in great part rewritten for publication in their present form, in the hope that they may prove useful to all who wish to attain a connected and comprehensive view of the life of our Lord, and especially to teachers or Bible-class pupils who follow the lessons of the Gospel History Series. While acknowledging my obligation to the editors of the Blakeslee Lessons, for the plan and method by which they have thrown such light upon the study of the Bible, I must myself bear all responsibility for the statements and teachings of these chapters. It is proper to add that in preparing these papers I have made free use of my *Life of Christ in Picture and Story* (American Tract Society), and of my *Studies in St. John's Gospel*, published in THE EVANGELIST in connection with the International Lessons of 1891.

My brightest hope in sending these studies forth is that those who use them may find in them something of the revelation of the beauty of the Lord that has come to me in preparing them.

L. S. H.

New York, November, 1895.



# Contents.

	PAGE
PUBLISHER'S PREFACE . . . . .	iii
AUTHOR'S PREFACE . . . . .	v
<hr/>	
CHAPTER I.—INTRODUCTORY . . . . .	3
Lesson 1.*	
CHAPTER II.—THE WORD MADE FLESH . . . . .	7
Lesson 2.	
CHAPTER III.—THE CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF JESUS . . . . .	11
Lesson 3.	
CHAPTER IV.—JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE FORERUNNER OF CHRIST . . . . .	17
Lesson 4.	
CHAPTER V.—JESUS ENTERING ON HIS MINISTRY . . . . .	21
Lesson 5.	
CHAPTER VI.—THE BEGINNINGS OF FAITH IN JESUS . . . . .	26
Lesson 6.	
CHAPTER VII.—THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S WORK IN JERUSALEM . . . . .	29
Lesson 7.	
CHAPTER VIII.—JESUS IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA . . . . .	32
Lesson 8.	
CHAPTER IX.—THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S WORK IN GALILEE . . . . .	37
Lesson 10.	
CHAPTER X.—THE CALL OF THE FOUR, AND THE FIRST PREACHING TOUR . . . . .	42
Lesson 11.	
CHAPTER XI.—THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES FINDING FAULT WITH JESUS . . . . .	47
Lesson 12.	
CHAPTER XII.—THE SABBATH QUESTION: FIRST PLOTS TO KILL JESUS . . . . .	52
Lesson 13.	
CHAPTER XIII.—THE CHOOSING OF THE TWELVE . . . . .	57
Lesson 14.	
CHAPTER XIV.—THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT . . . . .	62
Lesson 15.	
CHAPTER XV.—THE SECOND PREACHING TOUR . . . . .	67
Lesson 16.	
CHAPTER XVI.—A DAY OF TEACHING BY THE SEA OF GALILEE . . . . .	72
Lesson 17.	
CHAPTER XVII.—A DAY OF MIRACLES BY THE SEA OF GALILEE . . . . .	77
Lesson 18.	
CHAPTER XVIII.—THE THIRD PREACHING TOUR . . . . .	82
Lesson 19.	
CHAPTER XIX.—THE CRISIS AT CAPERNAUM . . . . .	87
Lesson 20.	
CHAPTER XX.—THE WITHDRAWAL INTO NORTHERN GALILEE . . . . .	93
Lesson 22.	
CHAPTER XXI.—THE TRANSFIGURATION, AND THE RETURN TO CAPERNAUM . . . . .	98
Lesson 23.	
CHAPTER XXII.—AN AUTUMN VISIT TO JERUSALEM . . . . .	102
Lesson 24.	

\* The lesson numbers under the chapter titles refer to THE BIBLE STUDY UNION LESSONS ON THE GOSPEL HISTORY OF JESUS CHRIST.

	PAGE
CHAPTER XXIII. — CHRIST'S FINAL DEPARTURE FROM GALILEE, AND THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTY . . . . .	107
Lesson 25.	
CHAPTER XXIV. — A WINTER VISIT TO JERUSALEM . . . . .	112
Lesson 26.	
CHAPTER XXV. — DISCOURSES ON PRAYER AND AGAINST THE PHARISEES . . . . .	116
Lesson 27.	
CHAPTER XXVI. — THE SABBATH QUESTION, AND THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER . . . . .	121
Lesson 28.	
CHAPTER XXVII. — THREE PARABLES OF GRACE AND TWO OF WARNING . . . . .	126
Lesson 29.	
CHAPTER XXVIII. — THE RAISING OF LAZARUS, AND THE WITH- DRAWAL TO EPHRAIM . . . . .	132
Lesson 30.	
CHAPTER XXIX. — JESUS BEGINNING HIS LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM . . . . .	137
Lesson 31.	
CHAPTER XXX. — TEACHINGS BY THE WAY: WORLDLY AND SPIRITUAL WEALTH AND GREATNESS . . . . .	141
Lesson 32.	
CHAPTER XXXI. — FROM JERICHO TO BETHANY: THE CLOSE OF THE LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM . . . . .	146
Lesson 33.	
CHAPTER XXXII. — THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY, AND THE SECOND CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE . . . . .	152
Lesson 35.	
CHAPTER XXXIII. — CHRIST'S AUTHORITY CHALLENGED . . . . .	157
Lesson 36.	
CHAPTER XXXIV. — JESUS' LAST CONFLICT WITH THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES . . . . .	161
Lesson 37.	
CHAPTER XXXV. — THE CLOSE OF CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY . . . . .	166
Lesson 38.	
CHAPTER XXXVI. — JESUS AND THE FOUR ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES . . . . .	170
Lesson 39.	
CHAPTER XXXVII. — THE LAST SUPPER . . . . .	174
Lesson 40.	
CHAPTER XXXVIII. — OUR LORD'S FAREWELL DISCOURSES . . . . .	179
Lesson 41.	
CHAPTER XXXIX. — JESUS IN GETHSEMANE . . . . .	185
Lesson 42.	
CHAPTER XL. — THE TRIAL OF JESUS . . . . .	190
Lesson 43.	
CHAPTER XLI. — THE CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL . . . . .	196
Lesson 44.	
CHAPTER XLII. — THE RESURRECTION MORNING . . . . .	200
Lesson 45.	
CHAPTER XLIII. — THE RESURRECTION EVENING, AND THE DOUBTING THOMAS . . . . .	205
Lesson 46.	
CHAPTER XLIV. — THE GALILEAN APPEARANCES, AND THE AS- CENSION . . . . .	209
Lesson 47.	

# THE LIFE OF THE LORD JESUS.

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## CHAPTER I.

### INTRODUCTORY.

IT is with peculiar joy that the thoughtful teacher takes up with his pupils the Life of the Lord Jesus. This is the centre of all our Bible study; it should also be its beginning; it will surely be its end. All other parts of the Bible, whether written before or after the incarnation, find their chief value in their relation to that life, which in itself was the perfect revelation of God.

Far more of the Old Testament is Messianic prophecy than is usually perceived. The story of creation, with man formed in the image of God and quickened to life by his breath, is a prophecy of the true Son of man in whom is the Spirit of God, not by measure, but without limit. But here at the outset the prophetic history is interrupted by the free choice of man to sin. Adam chose to set up his own will against the will of God, and so sin came into the world, with all its terrible effects — separation from God, judgment and punishment.

That the plans of God for the perfecting of the race in holiness and happiness might be realized, it now became necessary to break the power of sin — to bring the will of man into true harmony with God's will — and to exalt holiness. That this could be done only through the sacrifice of the Son of God shows how terrible is sin and how marvelous is the love of God to men.

Even in the very hour of man's first sin, a promise of redemption from sin is given in the first spoken prophecy (Gen. 3:15). There is here no explicit promise of the one Redeemer; the time for that had not come. The assurance to

Eve was that a long continued struggle of her seed against the power of evil should end in the ultimate triumph of good. With the call to Abram the family was selected through which this promised triumph should come. So the development of promise and prophecy went on ; the ideals of a holy land, of a holy nation, of the kingdom of God, of a conquering King, and of a suffering Servant, given in the history of the chosen people, properly belong to Messianic prophecy. That the Redeemer is actually the Son of God in a different way from that in which all mankind are his sons is the latest development of prophecy, dimly prefigured in passages like Psalm 2 and Isaiah 9 : 6 ; but not at all recognized until the very last times, when, as the author of the epistle to the Hebrews says (1 : 1), God having spoken to man in many ways by prophets now spoke by a Son.

From very early times there had been a historic preparation for his coming. First in the choice of Abraham to be the founder of a nation peculiarly fitted by natural characteristics — tenacity, vigor, a blending of the idealistic and the practical, a genius for religion — to receive and cherish the gradual revelation, to endure a long course of discipline, including transplantation, slavery, war, prosperity and adversity, without losing either racial identity or that hope of the Messiah which was its distinguishing characteristic. Cyrus had broken up the corrupt, effeminate, luxurious empires of the East and made way for the sterner and purer civilization of the West. The Greek dominion under Alexander and his successors had given a perfect language to the whole civilized world ; and Greek philosophy had given a blow to the corruption and superstition of ancient polytheism, and “ had taught the world to think.” Then, at last, had come the Roman empire, uniting the civilized world, giving, with its perfect military system, high sense of justice and stern ideal of obedience, one law and one system of communication and of protection throughout its wide domain, as the Greeks had given it one language. Then, historically, the fullness of the time had come.

It had come intellectually. The grossness of polytheism had been succeeded by the very highest and purest philosophical system — that of Plato — which, apart from revelation, it is perhaps possible for the mind of man to evolve. And yet the world was none the better for it, but, in fact, in many important points it was worse. Philosophy was insufficient to meet the highest needs of thinking men, and too high to meet the wants of the ignorant. The worship of false gods by the people was therefore encouraged by the learned and powerful, who themselves were atheists, and the natural result was a state of sensuality, cruelty, and selfishness such as had never before been known. The purer spirits turned to Judaism; there were thousands of proselytes in every country and in every rank of society; but Judaism, though attractive for its high personal morality, and especially for its Messianic hope, was repellent to the more high-minded Gentiles by reason of the hypocrisy and rapacity of Jews in high station. Judaism itself needed reforming; all other religions and philosophies were vain; the world was now ripe for Christianity; the fullness of the time had come.

The study of the life of Christ, to which this brief historical review has brought us, is to be pursued by means of the four gospels. Two of these are attributed to apostles, — Matthew and John, — and two to companions and friends of apostles, — Mark and Luke. The two latter, with Matthew, cover practically the same ground and are called the synoptic gospels. Which of the four was first written has not yet been decided; most scholars are of the opinion that there was an earlier account underlying the synoptics; but when it was written, whether it was written at all or circulated orally, are questions to which no decisive answer has been given.

Matthew, or Levi, was a tax collector, a class greatly despised by the Jews. He was one of the earliest to be called by Jesus to leave his occupation and attach himself entirely to him. He evidently wrote for Jews; to show that Jesus of Nazareth

is the fulfillment of prophecy; and that the kingdom of God is to be founded on his redemptive work. His gospel is the gospel of Christ's Galilean discourses.

Mark was a friend and companion of the apostles Peter and Paul. One of the earliest Christian writers relates that he wrote what Peter told him of the sayings of Christ, and it is strikingly apparent that the scope of Mark's gospel is precisely that of Peter's preaching (Acts 1 : 22 ; 10 : 37-42). He wrote for Gentile Christians, and he therefore gives no place to the genealogy of Jesus or to his earlier years. His gospel is especially the gospel of our Lord's personality, telling more of what he did than of what he taught. His style is exceedingly picturesque, direct and rapid; his is the realistic gospel.

Luke was a Gentile physician, an accomplished writer, the friend and companion of St. Paul. He wrote for all Gentiles, whether Christians or not, though he dedicated his gospel to a personal friend. It was his purpose to collect all the facts of Christ's life which could be authenticated. He therefore begins at the very beginning, with the birth of John the Baptist, and closes with the ascension. This is the gospel of the prayers and parables of Jesus; the poetic gospel, containing songs and prophecies; the gospel of women, of children, of the afflicted in body and mind; in fact its scope is far wider than that of either of the other synoptics.

John was the beloved disciple: the one, surely, who knew our Lord better than any of his other disciples. He was, therefore, more deeply concerned than any of the others to make known Christ's divinity. Though written with immediate reference to the churches in Asia Minor, his gospel was, in fact, written for all men in all time. It is the gospel of the divinity of Jesus, and of eternal life.



## CHAPTER II.

### THE WORD MADE FLESH.

John 1:1-18; Luke 1:26-38; 2:1-20.

THE fullness of the time had come; the Messiah had appeared. The history of his life on earth and of the establishment of his kingdom was to be written, and the apostle John, in the prologue of his gospel, begins at the true beginning of this history, telling what manner of being he was.

The Jews had entirely misapprehended the true character of him whom they eagerly anticipated. Groaning under the oppressions of foreign conquerors, and painfully sighing for freedom, they had lost sight of those prophecies and those prophetic elements of their own history which showed God's anointed as anointed Priest and enlightening Prophet and suffering Servant, and dwelt only upon those which prefigured him as Conqueror and King. Thus they came more and more to overlook the moral need of a Saviour from sin, although everything in their law and ritual pointed to this; and more and more ardently to long for a Saviour from oppression and from political bondage. Although John's gospel was not written for Jews, it was written for men whose religious notions were gained from Jews. The cradle of every Gentile church was the synagogue.

John therefore undertakes to correct Jewish misconceptions by showing the true nature of God's anointed. He was no mere man, but the Word, the utterance or self-revelation of God. He had eternally existed with God, in the beginning, before the foundations of the earth were laid. As the Word, he had been the agent of creation, and so through him all nature was a revelation of God. Yet the Word was not simply

a power or attribute of God, but a distinct personality ; not *it*, but *he* was the life, the sustaining energy of the universe, and the light, the moral power of humanity. From the entrance of sin into the world, he, as a divine person, had been continually fulfilling the prophecy then uttered by God (Gen. 3 : 18), the light shining in the darkness, and the darkness comprehending (getting possession of) it not.

Though this light had been continually coming into the world, the world had not accepted him ; yet here and there had been those who had received him in prophetic faith, and had entered into that true relation with God which was Adam's in the day of his creation — a relation not physical, but spiritual ; not of the flesh, nor of human will, but the inbreathing of the life of God.

Then, at last, the Word became flesh. Not a mere incarnation or emanation, such as we read of in Hindoo or Egyptian mythology ; the Word took upon him a true humanity, the humanity that God placed in Eden. He became flesh, but not sinful flesh. Here is the sacred key to the human history of our Lord, the one to which we must hold fast, if we would enter into the meaning, not of his external history, but of his personal life. Jesus was the very glory of humanity, a true Son of man, and no man who sins is that. His perfection was not that of which the Greeks dreamed, physical beauty, but moral and spiritual, the beauty of holiness. Full of grace and truth, he manifested forth the glory of God, as the Shekinah in the wilderness tabernacle had done.

Of his coming God had sent one to bear witness, a man whose name was John. Some had taken him to be the Messiah ; but the light that was in him was only as that of a lamp, not of one who had light in himself. He bore the distinct witness that Jesus, the Christ, was the Son of God. In this human Jesus, this divine Word, this anointed One, was revealed the grace and truth of God ; truths for which the law given by Moses was a preparation. Through him was communicated to

men the divine fullness ; through him, the only begotten Son of God, it was authentically declared that God is our Father.

The evangelist Luke begins at the earliest period of Christ's human history the story of this wondrous life of the eternal Word, who left the glory of heaven for a life of humiliation on earth to manifest God and restore men to their true relations to him. The angel Gabriel announced to Mary, a peasant maiden of Nazareth, betrothed to Joseph the carpenter, that she was to be the mother of the Son of the Most High, the infant Messiah. We must observe that, both in this announcement and in that made to Zacharias (Luke 1 : 11-20), six months before, that he was to be the father of the forerunner of the Messiah, the angel Gabriel gives a description which answers literally to the expectation of the devout Jews of that and former times, but does not correspond in any literal way with the actual life of Jesus. This is an example of the way in which God reveals truth, and we should never forget it in our study of the Bible. He knows just how far the human mind has advanced, and how much of truth it can take in, and he never bewilders nor distracts the mind from the essential by revealing things that it cannot receive. It would have been impossible for Mary to understand the spiritual meaning of this prophecy if it had been put into plain language ; and yet the prophecy was entirely true ; it covered a field much larger than that of Mary's vision, yet we who have the light of the knowledge of Jesus' earthly life can see that spiritually though not historically it was described in these prophetic words.

The beautiful submission of Mary, in circumstances more trying to faith and obedience than any others we can possibly conceive of, shows her deeply religious character and her eminent spiritual fitness to become the mother of the Messiah. As far as she could foresee, it must bring upon her misapprehension and even contumely. But she did not make this an objection. She was, with no reservation, the handmaid of the Lord, to whom his word was law. Matthew (1 : 18-25) tells

how God protected her, and taught her betrothed husband in a dream the singular honor bestowed upon her; whereupon that just man took her at once under the shelter of his own name, and kept in his heart the revelation he had received.

The home of Joseph and Mary was Nazareth, an obscure village in Galilee; but prophecy had taught that the Messiah should be born in Bethlehem, the ancestral city of the kings of David's line. The natural course of history, being all in the power of God, wrought for the fulfillment of this prophecy. A decree of the emperor Augustus that all his subjects should be enrolled — with a view, no doubt, to one of those census lists which he was fond of making — took effect in Palestine just at this time, and according to Jewish custom each man was enrolled, not in the place of his abode, but in the ancestral seat of his family. Joseph, being of the house and lineage of David, must repair to Bethlehem, and under the circumstances he would naturally take with him his betrothed wife, Mary. There, then, the promised Child was born.

Knowing what we do of the eternal history of this Child, we should not be surprised at what took place at his birth, — the announcement by angels to certain devout men that the Christ was born, and the manifestation to earth of the joy in heaven at this marvelous event, which more than any other in human history manifested the glory of God and promised peace to earth. No act of which the human mind can conceive so reveals the character of God, his unspeakable love and justice and holiness and forgiveness, as the coming to earth of the Son of God and his taking on human flesh. Nothing else of which we could possibly conceive could be such a guarantee of peace on earth, as the life on earth of One who came from heaven to be himself our peace in making man able and willing to be at one with God.

## CHAPTER III.

### THE CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH OF JESUS.

Luke 2 : 22-39 ; Matt. 2 : 1-23 ; Luke 2 : 40-52.

THE story of the presentation of the Child Jesus in the temple is an important witness to the date of Luke's gospel. It gives a very precise picture of the customs of the Jews during the period that preceded the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 70), customs which at that time forever passed away. Many trifling details are given of the kind which easily slip away from memory and can never afterwards be recalled, and this chapter could not have been written much later than that date.

Being carried to the temple at the age of six weeks to be redeemed by an offering from the duty of personal service, as the law of Moses required, the little Child Jesus was met by an aged man and woman, Simeon and Anna, whose ardent piety kept them always in or near the temple. They belonged to the group of *his own*, who in all ages had been receiving him by faith (see Chapter II), the spiritually-minded class to which Joseph and Mary themselves belonged, most of whom, however, were probably gathered in Jerusalem at this time, in anticipation of the Messiah's coming. To Simeon had actually come a revelation, through the Holy Spirit, that he should not die until he had seen the Messiah. In the course of Simeon's long life there had been many false Messiahs; the general expectancy had lent itself to such impostors (comp. Acts 5 : 36, 37) ; but he was resting in the promise that he should live until he had seen the Lord's anointed. He had been enabled to accept those prophecies which showed that the benefit of the

Messiah's reign would not be confined to the Jews; that he was to be a light to lighten the Gentiles; though it is not probable that he saw that it was through this large diffusion of the Messiah's beneficent influence that the glory of Israel would be brought about. The aged Anna had also the prophetic endowment, but not as Simeon had it. She did not speak in the temple, but privately among the spiritually-enlightened few who, understanding that the Messiah's kingdom must be one of holiness and purity, and believing, as all Jews did, that the Holy Land was to be its centre, looked for the redemption, that is, the purification, of Jerusalem, as the first step toward its establishment.

From this Jerusalem visit, Joseph and Mary, with the infant Jesus, no doubt returned to Bethlehem, which they would deem the proper place in which to bring up him who according to prophecy should come out of that town. Here they sooner or later received a visit from three wise men from the East, who had seen a heavenly sign that had led them to believe that the King, the expectation of whose advent was widely spread, had been born.

The inquiries by which the Magi learned in Jerusalem of the birthplace of this little Child set all the capital in a ferment. Herod the Idumæan, the reigning king, was both hated and feared, as a ferocious and bloodthirsty tyrant of an alien and despised race. Even now, when, after thirty years of a reign stained by unnumbered crimes, he was dying of an incurable disease, his subjects knew that he would stop at no atrocity to put down a pretender to the throne. On the other hand, Herod knew that his subjects were only waiting a favorable opportunity for insurrection. In fact, in the year 4 B.C., or shortly after the birth of our Lord, there arose an insurrection, led by two rabbis, not, indeed, with intent to depose Herod, but to tear down from the temple gates the golden eagles of Rome, which, in violation of the second commandment as they understood it, Herod had affixed there. The

tumult had been quelled and the leaders burned alive; but to Herod the news that a Child supposed to be the Messiah had been born would sound like the signal of a new insurrection, with such a rallying cry as would render it invincible.

He at once took measures to protect himself by ordering the murder of all the children of Bethlehem under two years old. But the plans of God are not so thwarted. Joseph, divinely warned, fled by night with Mary and the little Child to Egypt, then a peculiarly safe refuge for such Jews as were under Herod's displeasure. Their exile was a short one, for in the same year Herod died, and Joseph, in a dream, was divinely bidden to return to Palestine. He would naturally have gone again to Bethlehem, but he found that Judea was still not a safe place for the Child Jesus. Archelaus, who had succeeded his father, Herod, was notoriously violent and tyrannical to a degree not equaled by any other of Herod's sons. Immediately on his proclamation as heir to the throne, a rebellion arose which he stamped out with much bloodshed. Judea in such a tumult could not be a suitable abiding place, and Joseph and Mary returned to the safe seclusion of their early home, Nazareth.

A single verse (Luke 2:40) sums up all that the evangelists directly tell us of Jesus' childhood, but there are a few glimpses of it elsewhere in the New Testament, and history shows us the conditions under which he lived. The inspired writers give us no picture of him as a monstrosity of perfection or of power. Emptied of all heavenly glory (Phil. 2:6-8), he was a true child, made in all things like unto his brethren (Heb. 2:17), the boys and girls that are growing up in our homes to-day. Like them he learned obedience through the things that he suffered (Heb. 5:8), being only unlike them in this,—that none of the things that he suffered were punishment. Always obeying his parents, it was as painful for him as it is for any child to give up his play to perform some homely task, to bear with the petulance and selfishness of younger children, to

endure the pain of accident or privation; the difference was that he loved to do right always, and was willing to suffer, if need were, in doing it. But the sufferings through which he was made perfect (Heb. 2:10) were not confined to the last three years of his life, any more than the temptations by which he became able to succor us (2:18) were confined to the forty days after the baptism. He could not be our Exemplar if he had not been *in all points* tempted like as we are; nor could he have been our Saviour, if it could not have been added of him that he was *yet without sin* (Heb. 4:15).

There probably was a school at Nazareth attached to the synagogue, for a few years later it was enacted that in every town schools should be established and children brought to them at six or seven years of age; and schools must have been very general before such an enactment could have been made. But with or without schools, every child was thoroughly taught the law, being able to repeat and generally to read it. "We take most pains of all with the instruction of children," says Josephus, adding that this is to the Jews "the most important affair of our whole life." Children, he says, can more easily repeat all the laws than their own name, learning them *from their first consciousness*.

Whether or not he went to the synagogue school there was one school from which the Boy Jesus learned much — that of nature. Nazareth is one of the most beautifully situated of all the villages of Palestine. Itself on a high plateau, it is surrounded on all sides by hills, "like a rose by its leaves," says one writer. There is one place on the hill where we may be very sure that the Boy Jesus often went, a place from which the eye can range from snowy Hermon on the north to the broad plain of Esdraëlon on the south, where Tabor and Carmel can be seen, the Bay of Acre outspreading to the sunset, and the Sea of Galilee, gleaming like a sapphire in a deep hollow below the hills. Every foot of ground was classic with the history of God's chosen people; from every point the echo



of psalm and prophecy and prayer must have fallen upon the ear of this Boy, whose heart and mind were full of the history of his people. There, as he lay upon the grass, withdrawn from the plays of his comrades, he would ponder on the lilies of the field, arrayed as Solomon never was; the grass which to-day is and to-morrow is cast into the oven; would see the fox flashing by to his hole; and hear the voice of the wind blowing where it listeth, and the twittering of sparrows, which are the heavenly Father's care.

It seems probable that the Boy Jesus learned more than one language. Hebrew was no longer spoken in Palestine, but Aramaic, a branch of the Syriac, and only scholars learned to read Hebrew. Greek, however, was the language of culture and of society, and of necessity those engaged in trade or domestic service had a speaking knowledge of it, as such people in many parts of the continent of Europe speak several languages to-day. Our Lord and his disciples probably knew something of Greek; they needed no interpreter with the Syrophœnician woman (Mark 7: 26), or with the Greeks who desired to see Jesus at the feast (John 12: 20-22). That he had a familiar acquaintance, not with the law only, but with all the Old Testament, is evident, and certain scholars have thought that they could find in his discourses tokens of acquaintance with other Jewish literature.

How much did Jesus know in his childhood of his unique relation to God and to the Messianic hope? The one incident of this period that is given us is our best guide to this answer — the story of his first Passover, when he was twelve years old. It must, from every point of view, have been an important experience. The seventy miles' journey on foot, with an ever increasing caravan, as new companies joined it at successive stages; the great multitude, chanting to the accompaniment of the flute the Songs of Ascents (Psalms 120-134); must have made a deep impression on the earnest Boy. And if, as we may conjecture, his mother, on some quiet evening of this

journey, withdrew with her Son from the reposing company, and under the solemn light of the Passover full moon told him the marvelous story of his birth, the whole being of the wondrous Child must have thrilled with the consciousness of his peculiar relationship to God. No wonder that not even the strange sights of the Holy City could attract him from the terrace of the temple, where, during the feast days, the rabbis of the Sanhedrin sat, permitting any one to come to them, both to hear and to ask questions. The question which he put to his parents when, having missed him from the returning company they at last after three days found him there, says much as to what this experience had been to him. *Wist ye not*, he asks with grave surprise, have you not all along known that which would teach you, *that it behooves me to be in my Father's house?*

Yet, if he now felt himself to be so truly the Child of God that the other parentage had become secondary in his heart, this is not to say that he held the earthly tie to be less dear or less sacred than before. The more he realized his divine Sonship, the more precious to him would be the earthly sonship to which the will of God had made him subject. And the growing consciousness of his mission would make him not less, but more, ready to live obscurely for eighteen years longer, toiling for his livelihood (Mark 6:3), and perhaps (being the eldest son, and Joseph apparently dead) for that of his mother and her younger children. Every hour was an hour of preparation for his great work; every experience of his daily life contributed to his fitness for it, dwelling as he did in perpetual consciousness of God, and serenely content to abide the Father's time for the manifestation of his eternal purpose.

## CHAPTER IV.

JOHN THE BAPTIST, THE FORERUNNER OF CHRIST.

Luke 1:5-25, 57-80; 3:1-17; Matt. 3:1-12; Mark 1:1-8.

PROPHECY had given the Jews to expect, not the Messiah only (the messenger of the covenant, Mal. 3:1), but also a forerunner, God's messenger, who was to prepare the Messiah's way. Two forerunners, indeed, were expected (John 1:21), Elijah (Mal. 4:5) and an unnamed prophet, sometimes supposed to be Jeremiah (John 6:14; comp. Matt. 16:14; Luke 9:19), whose coming is predicted, not in the Old Testament, but in one of the books of the Apocrypha, which, we must carefully observe, very powerfully influenced the Jews of this time.

Six months before the announcement of the birth of Jesus (see Chapter II), the birth of this forerunner was announced to a priest named Zacharias, who, with his aged wife the daughter of a priest, belonged to the saintly group, widely scattered, but yet a true spiritual community, to which Simeon and Anna, Joseph and Mary belonged, beautiful exponents of Old Testament religion, blameless in more than a ceremonial sense.

To this aged priest, on the day when at last the lot gave to him the high honor of offering incense in the temple, appeared the angel Gabriel announcing that he was to become the father of a son who, in the vigor and strength of a great mission, should run before the spiritual chariot of the Messiah, as Elijah before that of Ahab (1 Kings 18:46), preparing the people by contrition and obedience for the coming of the Lord.

In due time the son was born and received the name John (*Jehovah is gracious*), given him by the angel. On this occasion

the aged father broke forth into a song of praise, prophesying salvation to Israel, and repeating the glorious prophecy of the angel that he was to be the forerunner of the Messiah, to prepare for his reception. The angel had said nothing of the *remission of sins*, but the deep religious consciousness of Zacharias, quickened with prophetic illumination, showed him, as it showed his son in later years, that this was the true preparation for the Messiah's coming.

“Strong in spirit” we should expect such a child as this to be. With the death of his parents, aged when he was born, knowing the prophecies concerning himself, John followed the example of many spiritually-minded men of his time, and sought the deeper seclusion of the neighboring desert, until the day when the word of God should come to him to summon him to his work.

John was thirty years old (probably A.D. 26) when he came forth from this retirement, and proceeded, preaching as he went (Matt. 3 : 1), toward the Jordan, by way of the steppe-like country at the southern extremity of the river, where it enters the Dead Sea.

He had appeared suddenly, without a warning, like his prototype, Elijah (1 Kings 17 : 1); and in his dress, the *rough garment* of camel's hair worn by the ancient prophets (2 Kings 1 : 8; Zech. 13 : 4, comp. Matt. 11 : 8), and his severely simple food, he recalled Elijah to the public mind. He called every one to repent, for the kingdom of heaven was at hand. This preaching which Mark, with great significance, calls the beginning of the gospel (1 : 1), since only a contrite heart can appreciate the glad tidings of a Saviour, did not, however, proclaim the kingdom of heaven in the sense in which Jesus afterwards proclaimed it. To John at this period of his mission, as to the old prophets, the approaching time was a time of judgment, the great and terrible day (Joel 2 : 1, 2; Isaiah 13 : 9; Zeph. 1 : 14-16) which must precede the reign of the Messiah; the day when the axe would be laid at the

root of the trees to cut down all that were decayed or unfruitful, and when the chaff would be winnowed from the wheat that only the righteous remnant (Isaiah 11:11, 16; 46:3, 4; Jer. 31:7; Joel 2:32; Zeph. 3:13) should partake of the glory of that reign. This act of separation had been generally understood to refer to the Gentiles who were mingled among the Jews. Simeon understood better than this (Luke 2:34), and John saw the truth still more clearly. It would not suffice, he taught, to be the children of Abraham. Only a true repentance, finding its expression in righteous acts (Matt. 3:8), each man in his own sphere (Luke 3:10-14), would prove men to be true children of the coming kingdom; only by entering into a state of moral purity through the remission of sins could the way of the Lord be made straight (Mark 1:3; Isaiah 40:3).

The whole nation was stirred by John's preaching. Multitudes went out to hear him, and were baptized by him as a token of repentance on their part, and of the washing away of their sins by him in whose name John came. Even Pharisees and Sadducees came to his baptism; but as their coming was not an evidence of repentance, but rather of the self-righteous assumption that they were necessarily prominent members of the kingdom, they were received with bitter denunciation and warnings of the terrors of the coming day of wrath.

Every one deemed John a prophet (Luke 20:6; Matt. 21:26; Mark 11:32); many saw in him the promised forerunner; many—for there was much confusion of thought on this subject—wondered *whether haply he were the Christ* (Luke 3:15, comp. John 1:20). To this he gave a distinct answer. Mighty as he was in spiritual power (Luke 1:80), One mightier than he was to follow; One whom he might indeed run before, but to whom he was not worthy to render the most menial personal service (Matt. 3:11). His baptism was the external expression of repentance and the desire for a new life, but the Messiah's baptism would be of two kinds. To

those who, prepared by the baptism of true repentance, were ready to receive him, a baptism of the Holy Spirit (Joel 2 : 28) with the power to resist sin (comp. Ezek. 36 : 27) ; to those who refused repentance and forgiveness, a baptism of destroying fire (Matt. 3 : 10, 12, comp. Mal. 3 : 2).

John's preaching was not wholly denunciatory ; it is not thus that the way of the Lord is prepared. Luke expressly tells us that with many other exhortations he preached good tidings unto the people (3 : 18).

## CHAPTER V.

### JESUS ENTERING ON HIS MINISTRY.

Matt. 3: 13—4: 11; Mark 1: 9—13; Luke 3: 21, 22; 4: 1—13.

AS John moved slowly up the Jordan valley baptizing the multitudes who flocked to him from Judea and Perea and finally from Galilee, his call reached Jesus, occupied at his carpenter's bench at Nazareth. He recognized it as the divine announcement that the hour for entering upon his work had come, and he at once repaired to the Jordan.

It was perhaps the dusk of evening, when all the people had been baptized for that day, and were reposing in their black tents or under the green booths that they had constructed for themselves along the riverside, when Jesus stood before John and asked for baptism. Though cousins, they had lived far apart, and had probably not met often, if ever; but something in Jesus convinced John that this was the One of whose coming he had already been divinely warned, with the promise of an attesting sign; One who was his spiritual superior, whom he shrank from baptizing until Jesus persuaded him that it was right that even he should submit to this rite. And *straightway* as they came up out of the water the sign was given. The spiritually illumined eye of each saw the Spirit of God, in bodily form as a dove, descend to abide upon Jesus, and each heard a voice speaking directly to his own heart. To John it attested the promised sign, to Jesus it spoke the word which answered to the witness of his own spirit, *Thou art my Son, my beloved*. It conferred upon him all that was now needed for his ministry, *power* to do that divine will which already his human will had accepted.

Why was Jesus baptized? Not, surely, for the remission of

sins. He was not only conscious of no sin (John 8:46), but all through the eighteen silent years since he had come to the special consciousness of his Sonship to the Father, his will had been ever coming into more conscious harmony with the divine will. Now conformity to the will of God, that is, obedience, is the central fact of repentance. This was what John had all along been preaching as the essential factor of his baptism (Matt. 3:8; Luke 3:11, 13, 14). It is a mistake to suppose that the consciousness of sin is the most important part of repentance. It is rather its reverse side, an element necessary, but temporary; for sin, when truly repented of, is forsaken. The abiding factor in every repentant soul is, "I delight to do thy will, O my God" (comp. Psalm 40:8). The significance of John's baptism was that it was the outward expression of the inward "purpose of and endeavor after new obedience." It became him to fulfill all righteousness by making the open vow of obedience. The vow was more, not less, significant because it expressed an obedience more perfect than that of any other man who passed under the baptismal waters (Phil. 2:8). It was here in the waters of the Jordan that he first took up the cross.

After the baptism the Spirit impelled him to go into the wilderness for the express purpose of being tempted by the devil. There, in a dreadful solitude, of which the wild creatures that surrounded him, even though harmless, served to render him the more sensible, he was for forty days subjected to conflict with Satan so terrible that during all that time he was utterly unconscious of bodily wants.

How could Jesus, the Sinless, the Obedient, be tempted? This difficult question grows clearer when we remind ourselves that *temptation is not sin*. To this we all have the witness of our own hearts; every one of us whose desire is for holiness has known what it is to be as our Lord was, tempted, yet without sin (Heb. 4:15). He was like us in this respect as in others; he differed from us in that he was always victorious.



There was no crisis in his life when he had to die unto sin and be born again unto righteousness. He, no more than we, could help being confronted with evil in the guise of good, and we are so far like him that *we are not tempted by sin in the guise of evil*. Only devils and Satanic natures love evil for its own sake; its temptation to us is that *it seems to be good*, and that was its temptation to him. But Jesus was quick to recognize this specious deceit. Not because he was divine, but because *as man* it was his meat, his whole purpose in life, to do the will of God (John 4:34; 6:38), therefore he was able to judge quickly and correctly between right and wrong (4:30).

But why was he called to undergo this long period of temptation? It was necessary to him as man as it is necessary to all men — for testing. It was especially necessary to him as Saviour of men. About to enter upon his public work, he must be fully aware of the strength of that power with which he had just been endued, of the sufficiency of those principles which he had been maturing during his long “silent years,” and of the strength of the forces of evil with which he would have to deal.

The three temptations with which the forty days of testing closed were typical of the struggle which he was to wage during the remainder of his life. For he did not here finally conquer Satan; his whole life was a struggle with the powers of evil, and only on the cross was the contest finished. But the victory which he here won was an earnest of final victory; the weapons of his warfare were here proven and were found to be entirely sufficient (2 Cor. 10:4).

The first temptation was a subtle attack upon his faith and obedience at a time of natural reaction from a state of high tension. Jesus had lately been in a wonderful manner declared the Son of God; now comes the suggestion: *If thou art indeed the Son of God* — perhaps it was all a mistake. Test it, prove it by a miracle which shall supply the very want from which

thou art now suffering: *Command this stone that it become a loaf.*

It is not sinful, it is only human to want bread when we are hungry, and Jesus had now become conscious that he wanted bread. But he wanted still more to do the will of God. And he perceived just where the temptation lay. Not as Son of God, but as *man* must he conquer if he was to redeem the world from sin; and his answer, in which he declines to discuss Satan's *if*, makes this plain. As *man* his meat and drink shall be to do God's will; a word from the mouth of God can provide for his wants, but he himself will not speak such a word, though he have the power. He will not separate himself from the human race with which for its salvation he has identified himself.

The second temptation (following the logical order of Matthew) appeals to the natural desire of Jesus for a speedy recognition of his character and mission. It was natural, not only because it would save him from pain and suffering, but because it would save the Jews from sin. There was a widespread expectation that the Messiah would suddenly appear in the temple (Mal. 3 : 1) to lead Israel to victory. If, said the tempter, Jesus would cast himself from that gable of Herod's porch which overhung the deep chasm of the brook Kedron, trusting in God to fulfill the promise of Psalm 91 : 11, 12, all Israel would recognize him at once. Jesus saw that such an act would be, not an exhibition of sublime faith, but presumptuous tempting of God. Not by arousing astonishment, but by winning the hearts of men, must his salvation be wrought. He would no more make parade of divine power now than later when he stood before those who came to arrest him (Matt. 26 : 53).

In the third temptation Satan confessed the importance of Christ's mission, but demanded (Luke 4 : 6) that he should accomplish it by admitting that the actual supremacy of the evil one over the world was the divine order. Many a

Christian does this, saying that *as things are* it is impossible to do in all things the will of God. So long as sin reigns, they say, we must not expect ideal goodness. So Satan said to Jesus, but he saw through the wretched sophistry. Not for a moment would he admit the right of Satan to reign. Sin abounds, but God alone reigns. Satan has power over men who will to sin, but he has no dominion over those whose will it is to do the will of God. Nor was Jesus blinded by Satan's false promise that on certain conditions the kingdom should be his. As Redeemer of men the kingdom was not his but God's. His work could not be furthered by an earthly kingship. This temptation, which often seduces Christians who think that worldly prestige will help them to do good, often occurred again to Jesus, but he was never blinded by it for a moment. In one sense this was the most seductive of all temptations, because *the kingdom* was the object of all Christ's desires and pains; in another it can hardly be held as a temptation, for Satan having now revealed himself (Luke 4 : 6), his suggestion is at once repudiated and himself commanded to depart (Matt. 4 : 10).

For a season he did depart, and then the angels came and rendered blessed ministry to Jesus, now fully equipped as the Captain of our salvation (Matt. 4 : 11 ; Mark 1 : 13, comp. Heb. 2 : 10). But the meaning of this threefold temptation was a part of all Jesus' future life; we find it in the Lord's Prayer, in its three petitions: Thy kingdom come, thy will be done, lead us not into temptation; we find it in his long nights of communion with the Father with whom he more and more felt himself to be one; we find it in his unutterable compassion for the multitudes, when they fainted and were scattered abroad as sheep having no shepherd, exposed to the attacks of him who goes about as a roaring lion; we find it in his willingness to die to deliver men from the power of temptation and from willingness to sin.

## CHAPTER VI.

### THE BEGINNINGS OF FAITH IN JESUS.

John 1 : 19—2 : 12.

JESUS returned from the wilderness of temptation to the Jordan, where, during his absence, John had been preaching and baptizing with ever growing popularity.

The Sanhedrin, or highest court of the Jews, which sat at Jerusalem, had at first looked with favor upon John's great popularity (John 5 : 35), as tending to promote Jewish hopes ; but they now thought it time to investigate it more closely ; a deputation of priests and Levites was therefore sent to ask John in what light he wished to be regarded. He readily understood that their unspoken question was whether he was himself the Messiah. That, he emphatically told them, he was not. Nor was he to them Elias, or any other expected prophet, because they were *not willing to receive him* (Matt. 11 : 14) with the message of repentance that he brought ; to such as they, not hostile, indeed, but indifferent, he could be but *a voice* proclaiming the Messiah's coming. His reference to the prophet Isaiah was, however, quite enough to make these questioners understand his office. In answer to their inquiry as to his baptism, he shows the influence of his interview with Jesus when he was baptized. He no longer contrasts his work with that of Christ, as he had done before, but maintains its importance as necessary to the manifestation of Christ (John 1 : 26, comp. vs. 31). Nor does he repeat the former announcement that Messiah is soon to come, but tells them that he is already among them. How little they were in earnest in this matter is shown by their taking no steps to find him.

The next day John pointed Jesus out, not to the deputation,

but to the people. Here again we see how much John had learned by his interview with Jesus. He no longer describes him as a Judge who will take away sin by destroying the sinner, burning the chaff with unquenchable fire. He has learned the greatest fact about the work of Christ, that salvation is by sacrifice, and he points to Jesus as *the Lamb of God, which taketh away the sin of the world*. He has learned too, the most important fact about the person of Christ, that he is *the Son of God*. It is the most impressive witness to the destructive nature of a preconceived opinion, closing the mind to the reception of new truth, that these two tremendous announcements produced absolutely no effect. The multitude to whom the Baptist spoke were longing for the Messiah, were believing that he was at hand and speedily to be revealed, and yet they were so bent upon finding him a king who, in the might of divinely given power, would destroy all their enemies and set up a kingdom in which his people should be supreme over the whole world, that they could not recognize him in this obscure and humble Nazarene whom John announced.

Among those who enjoyed John's teaching, the brighter spirits had naturally attached themselves to his person. Two of these disciples were standing with John the next day, the third day of this "bridal week" of the church as it has been beautifully called, when John again pointed Jesus out: *Behold the Lamb of God*; they would remember the rest. He cannot have been surprised that the two disciples immediately followed Jesus; it must have been with this purpose that he spoke.

One of these two, we have good reasons for believing, was the writer of this gospel, — the "beloved disciple." The other was Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter. So eager was he to share the acquaintance of Jesus with others who would be of his mind, that as soon as the interview was over he hastened away to find his own brother, Simon, and tell him the astounding news, *We have found the Messiah!* Simon believed it and came to Jesus; and it was then that our Lord gave the first

evidence of his marvelous knowledge of character by giving to Simon the prophetic surname of Peter, a rock.

The next day two more disciples were added, Philip and Nathanael. The latter was a man of singular purity of character, and therefore of unusual spiritual insight (Matt. 5:8). He, first of the disciples, took home to his intelligence the fact of the divine nature of Jesus: *Rabbi, thou art the Son of God!* It was in answer to this outbreak of adoring recognition that Jesus first called himself by that endearing title, the Son of man. It is when we are most deeply awed by his divinity that we most need to remember his true human nature. These events occurred on four successive days. Jesus had already received a twofold witness: from John the Baptist, and from the disciples; it was now time for him to witness to himself.

Together Jesus and the five returned to Galilee, stopping at Cana, the home of Nathanael. Here at a wedding occurred the opportunity for Jesus to witness to himself and to manifest his glory by a miracle, the turning of water into wine. We must observe that no parade was made of this miraculous deed; the time for the self-manifestation of Jesus to the world had not yet come; no one knew of it but the servants and his disciples. It was for the sake of his disciples that this miracle was done, and we may add, of his mother, from whom he was necessarily about to separate himself, and who would be indescribably sustained in a trial that the most tender mother among us cannot appreciate, by the memory of this witness to the glory of her Son. The important fact with regard to the miracle is that it manifested forth his glory to those who were prepared by a certain degree of faith and love for a whole-hearted belief and acceptance of Jesus as Lord. Not that they even yet understood all the meaning of his character and work. Such marvelous truths could hardly be appreciated all at once. These were but the beginnings of their faith in Jesus, as well as of the faith of the world.

## CHAPTER VII.

### THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S WORK IN JERUSALEM.

John 2: 13—3: 21.

ALL through the life of Jesus there are evidences that he was specially moved by the sight of the temple with its associations and typical meaning. On his first visit after entering upon his ministry, he would be peculiarly affected by the strong contrast between the ideal purity of his Father's house and its actual condition. For the Jews had made its outer court a *house of merchandise*, where beasts and birds of sacrifice were sold, and foreign money exchanged for the Jewish half shekel for the temple tax. This sight, which must always have been painful to Jesus, was now unendurable; with a burning indignation which could not be withstood, he cleared the temple court of these defiling presences. By his first public act he sought to reawaken in his nation a desire for that holiness which becomes the house of God (Psalm 93: 5).

Neither those whose traffic was interrupted, nor the rulers who drew large revenues from the rent of these privileges, resisted him. Both parties knew the meaning of the act: it was the Messenger of Jehovah whom the Baptist had announced coming *suddenly to his temple*, as Malachi had prophesied.

The disciples, who knew something of his heart, were more impressed by his burning zeal for the purity of his Father's house than by the expected fulfilment of prophecy. But the rulers refused to admit that which they should have learned from the Baptist preaching, that a national desire for holiness must precede the inauguration of the Messiah's kingdom, and they asked him to accredit himself by a still further sign. In

response he gave a sign which in fact tested not himself but them, their power to recognize the meaning of the religion of which they were the teachers. They might, with their covetousness and unspirituality, *destroy the temple*, the outward and visible sign, but that which it stood for, the tabernacling of God with men, revealed in his own person, they could not so destroy but that in three days he could restore it. *He spake*, indeed, *of the temple of his body*, after the allegorizing method of his time and people, of which there are many illustrations in the New Testament; and with which these learned rulers were familiar; but not till after his resurrection did his disciples recognize the Scripture (Psalm 16:10) to which he referred; the Jews never did. But the saying made a deep impression, and was kept in public memory; travestied, it became the corner-stone of his accusation (Matt. 26:61; 27:40).

To the learned, Jesus had given a sign which has remained through all time the crowning and adequate proof of his Messiahship: his resurrection from the dead. But to the poor, the ignorant, the humble, he gave more obvious signs, probably the healing of the sick (John 2:23, comp. 4:47). Great interest was excited by his acts, but few, if any, were added to the number of his real disciples.

The Sanhedrin were not at this time hostile to him, but for the most part, indifferent; they did not interfere with him, but rather, with a temporizing policy which was in itself guilt in those who should have led public opinion, they waited to see how things would turn. One of their number, however, Nicodemus, came to Jesus in the quiet of night and avowed, not only his personal belief in the divine mission of Jesus, but that of others among his colleagues, — *we know*, — basing it upon the signs Jesus had shown. Jesus answered his unspoken question with the announcement that no one could see the kingdom which he came to usher in, unless he was born anew. The expression was not entirely new to Nicodemus; the rabbis taught that proselytes must be born again before they could



be true Jews ; but Nicodemus did not see how this could apply to himself. It was in no captious spirit that he asked how a man could be born again when he was old ; the very question shows that he took home to himself what on the lips of Jesus was only a general statement. And in answer Jesus — who never explained truth to any who were unwilling to receive it — gave the fullest explanation of regeneration of which we have any record, showing that the kingdom was not a new social but a new moral state — the work of the Holy Spirit. Though a man were born a second time of the flesh, he would still be flesh ; what is needed is a *new creature*, a new spiritual man.

To the further question of Nicodemus, honestly desiring to know how he could apply these things to himself, Jesus utters a gentle reproof : he, a teacher of the people, might have learned this from the Scriptures. The things which Jesus and John the Baptist had so far taught had been *earthly* things — repentance, the coming of the kingdom, the new birth ; there were heavenly things that could only be told to those who had faith. It was these that Nicodemus desired to know, and Jesus told him that he was himself the Son of God from heaven ; that it was his mission to redeem the world by the sacrifice of himself, and that the world would be judged according as men accepted or rejected him. Illustrating these teachings of *heavenly things* by the Old Testament story of the serpent lifted up in the wilderness (Num. 21 : 9), he explained how, by his own death, the new life was to be given to those who believed in him.

The deepest teaching of all was that the gift of Jesus proved the love of God to men. And here Jesus leaves the title, Son of man, by which he has all along identified himself with Nicodemus and with all men, and calls himself the Son of God, the only begotten Son. This alone is proof enough of the boundless love of God to men ; it is reason enough why not to believe in such wondrous love is in itself a sentence of exclusion from the kingdom.

## CHAPTER VIII.

### JESUS IN JUDEA AND SAMARIA.

John 3:22—4:42.

THE Jewish Passover occurred just before harvest time, and as Jesus when on his way to Galilee spoke of harvest time as four months distant, it is evident that he remained eight months in Judea. Not, however, at Jerusalem. Jerusalem, in a sense, had had her "day" (Luke 19:42). As the representative city, not only of Palestine, but of all Judaism, it had been right that Jesus should first make himself known there, and at a feast time, when Jews were gathered together from all parts of the world. It was appropriate, moreover, that he should make himself known in precisely such a way as should *not* meet their expectation of a temporal ruler, but should show that his kingdom was one of holiness. This he had done, and he had not been received (see Chapter VII). A further preparatory work was clearly needed; and he retired into the country districts of Judea, accompanied by a few disciples, and there taught concerning the approach of the kingdom and the necessity of repentance. His teaching was accompanied with even greater success than that of John the Baptist had been. *All men came to him* and were baptized, not indeed by Jesus, but by his disciples (John 4:2). For Jesus himself to baptize would have been to act as if he were not the coming One whom John had announced, but only another forerunner. This baptism was not distinctively Christian baptism, which was never administered until after the Holy Spirit had been given at Pentecost. It was in substance the same rite and with the same significance as the baptism of John.

The Baptist had removed from Bethany to a place, now unknown, called *Ænon*, near *Salim*, and was continuing his work when his disciples brought him word of the great enthusiasm which was aroused by the preaching of Jesus, pointing out that his own following was falling off in consequence. John was too true a prophet not to recognize the meaning of this, and too noble a man not to rejoice in it. This was, indeed, nothing less than a testimony that he had succeeded in the work he had come to do.

As the months went on and the influence of Jesus in Judea spread more widely, the Sanhedrin became aware that their policy of indifference was not a safe one; they must either acknowledge Jesus or take some other course, and the simplest way seemed to be that of fostering a party of the Baptist, antagonistic to that of Jesus. Such a decision showed unmistakably that the preparatory work was done, so far as it could be done, and that Judea was no longer a hopeful field of labor. Jesus therefore retired into Galilee, where Herod, the tetrarch of Galilee, whose sins John as boldly rebuked as he had rebuked those of Pharisees and Sadducees, had by this time shut John up in prison. That the Judean work of Jesus had not been lost upon individuals we have the witness of the families at Bethany (John 11 : 1-5, etc.) and Bethphage (Mark 11 : 1-3), and of Mary, the mother of Mark (Matt. 26 : 17, 19, comp. Acts 12 : 12), as well as of Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea (John 19 : 38, 39). But of all the multitudes who followed him only one, Judas of Kerioth, a town of Judea, attached himself closely to his person. The rest of the twelve were Galileans.

The shortest way from northern Judea led through Samaria, and Jesus took that way. It was not a desirable route, for there was a strong enmity between the Jews and the Samaritans. The latter were children of Jacob, but of mixed lineage (John 4 : 12, comp. 2 Kings 17 : 24). They worshiped God, but schismatically, having had (until its destruction by John Hyrcanus) a temple on Mount Gerizim, on which mount they

still worshiped according to the law of Moses, accepting only the Pentateuch as sacred Scriptures. The bitterness between the pure Jews and the Samaritans was equally strong on both sides, and the pilgrims from Galilee to the feasts frequently went round by way of Perea, on the other side of the Jordan.

Coming to the well of Jacob (John 4 : 5, 6, 12, comp. Gen. 33 : 19) near Sychar (Shechem) at the hour of noon, Jesus sat down to rest while his disciples went to buy food. They were probably few in number ; there is reason to think that Andrew and Peter had already returned to Galilee ; John must have been with Jesus, for the story seems to be that of an eye-witness, and Judas had perhaps already attached himself to him. Philip and Nathanael were perhaps also of the company. The story of the coming of the woman to draw water while Jesus sat beside Jacob's well, and the conversation between them, need not be recapitulated. Our concern is with the meaning and purpose of the Lord's teaching. It was a gradual unfolding of truth, marvelously adapted to her character and capacity, and yet fuller and more outspoken than almost any of his other teachings until long afterwards.

Beginning with a request for a kindly service, he pointed her attention to the fact that there is a need in every human heart of something that only God can give, and that that need is so imperative that it must break down all walls of separation between men. The next step was to show her that he had both spiritual insight and superhuman knowledge, so that she could not but perceive that he was a prophet, although not even yet prepared to recognize in him that gift of God of which he had spoken to her.

With all the eagerness of a receptive and awakened mind, she at once put to him the great question which ever lay between her people and his : Where ought God to be worshiped ? And in answer he brought to her the great truth that the worship of God, whom both Jews and Samaritans believe to be

a spirit, must of necessity be spiritual, not dependent on place or ceremony.

Confused by the unfamiliar teaching, the woman's mind falls back upon the thought of him whom the Samaritans looked for, not, like the Jews, as king, but distinctively as prophet—the prophet like unto Moses—the Messiah. He, when he came, could perhaps make even this difficult truth plain. And now her mind being sufficiently prepared, Jesus announces that he is himself the Messiah.

Why did he make this clear announcement to this woman, and subsequently to the Samaritans (vs. 42), when he studiously kept it from the Judeans and Galileans till long after this? Partly, no doubt, because there was no danger of that misapprehension of his true mission which continually thwarted his work among his own people (John 6:15; Luke 23:2). In their expectation of a kingly Messiah, the Jews could not or would not perceive that his kingdom was not temporal, but spiritual; the Samaritans, looking only for a prophetic Messiah, were able to receive the larger truth about him when it was given to them.

Naturally, the woman having once caught a glimpse of the wonderful truth, hastened at the first interruption of their conference to call her neighbors to welcome this Stranger and learn of him (vss. 27-29). The interval was used by Jesus to teach his disciples two truths: that the spirit is so truly the life of the body that one whose whole heart is set upon doing the will and work of God has a source of physical power unknown to other men; and also that here, in despised Samaria, were men prepared to receive the truth. Through the green fields of springing corn, that lay between the well and the village, and which were then four months off from harvest, they might descry the forms of men coming toward them eager to receive the Messiah and learn of him—their hearts already white unto a harvest, to reap which was to receive the wages of unending joy and to gather fruit that would abide forever.

For two days he abode with them and taught, and they received the message. Thus they learned from their own experience the true character of the Messiah: that he was the Saviour of the world.

## CHAPTER IX.

### THE BEGINNING OF CHRIST'S WORK IN GALILEE.

Matt. 4: 12-17; 14: 3-5; Mark 1: 14, 15; 6: 17, 18; Luke 3: 18-20;  
4: 14-31; John 4: 43-54.

JESUS had come to God's covenant people for the purpose of their salvation. Yet as no one can be saved but by a free choice, it was necessary that as a people the Jews should accept or reject him. At the Jerusalem visit (see Chapter VII) the disposition of the representatives of the nation had been tested, and they were found to be not yet ready to accept him. In mercy to them Jesus would not press upon them his offer of himself until by further works of his they should be made more perfectly acquainted with his character and with the nature of his salvation. This preparation would be partly through the education of the people at large, partly through the choice and training of a special band of disciples.

For eight months Jesus had been carrying on a sort of preliminary teaching in Judea. During this time the Jewish hierarchy had endeavored to thwart his purpose by fomenting discord between those who inclined to his teachings and that great multitude who had been attracted by John the Baptist. This scheme had been checked by John's retirement into Galilee while Jesus remained in Judea. In Galilee John had preached not only to the multitudes, but also to the tetrarch, Herod Antipas, whose crimes he boldly rebuked, especially Herod's seduction of Herodias, his brother Philip's wife. Only the fear of the people, with whom John was very popular, kept Herod from adding the murder of John to his other crimes; he did go so far as to imprison him in the remote and formidable fortress of Machærus, east of the Dead Sea.

This act rendering any further thought of rivalry impossible, and the field, as formerly Judea, having been prepared for him by the Baptist, Jesus withdrew into Galilee. This shows no change in his plan — as if his purposes had been thwarted by his non-acceptance in Judea. It was not only in accordance with prophecy (Isaiah 9 : 1, 2), it was also an act of wisdom in view of the character of the Galilean people.

Galilee, which comprises the northern third of Palestine, between the Jordan and the Mediterranean, had been for many centuries the great highway of the nations. Through it passed the three great roads by which armies moved between Egypt and the East, by which the treasures of the East were carried by way of Damascus to the markets of Egypt and Europe. By reason of their intercourse with foreigners and their distance from the temple, the Galileans were widely different in character from the Judeans. Not so learned, for they had not the fine public school system of Judea, and by no means so orthodox, their souls were more free and more open to new light. They were ready enough to mingle in business affairs with the heathen who made up a large portion of the population in Tiberias and Capernaum and other cities, while the Judeans would scornfully refuse all intercourse with them ; but they did not, like the Judeans, imitate the pomp and luxury of Greece and Rome. They were a brave, moral, upright people, homely in their customs, but with wide-awake minds. The country was densely peopled, but immensely fertile ; every one was busy and comfortable but no one very rich. Such a state of things is precisely that in which new truth thrives best.

Yet there was likely to be no false excitement at the coming of Jesus — a prophet has no honor in his own country ; and at this time Jesus wanted to avoid excitement, to start fair, without controversy and without ill-grounded prepossession (comp. John 4 : 1, 3 with verses 43, 44).

From Sychar, where Jesus had been spending two days with the believing Samaritans, to Cana, was more than sixty miles,



and the Galilean country was thickly covered with villages. In how many of them he preached we cannot say, perhaps in two or three, as services were always held on Tuesday and Thursday as well as the Sabbath, that the country people who lived more than a Sabbath day's journey away might have the benefit of the service when they came to town on market days. At that period noted preachers were as much sought after as in our own day. Wherever Jesus preached he was welcomed; in every village were those who had been to the Feast and knew of his action there, and doubtless of others of his deeds.

From the outset his teaching was an advance on that of John the Baptist in two particulars: he no longer taught of the kingdom as something even a little in the future; *the time is fulfilled*, he said; and therefore to the admonition *Repent*, he added, *and believe in the Gospel*; the good news that the Messiah had come and the kingdom of God was now set up in the hearts of those who received him.

His first sojourning place was Cana, where he had friends, and where Nathanael lived. Here, apparently, his disciples left him and went to their own homes and common duties. He had not been long in Cana when he was visited by a nobleman from Capernaum—possibly Chuza, Herod's steward, or Manaen, his foster brother—with the request that he should heal his son, from which we may conjecture that Jesus had performed some miracles of healing in Judea (John 2:23). The response of Jesus to this request is remarkable, not because he healed the sick child from a distance of some fifteen or twenty miles—it is not surprising that the Lord of Life could command life—but for the method by which he aroused and fostered faith in this man's mind. This is what we are to observe in all Christ's miracles; in each one we may find some special adaptation to the spiritual state of those in or for whom they were wrought. Jesus taught this father that *belief* was the important thing, and with all his tender sympathy with every form of suffering, we see that in his mind the important

thing was always, not that men should be relieved from pain or sorrow, but that they should believe in him. Men were then, and they are now, more eager to see signs than to know Christ. Having first taught the nobleman the prime importance of belief, he appealed to the belief of which the man had given evidence by coming to him. By the nature of that appeal and its results he developed his faith and raised it into a higher sphere.

It was probably not long after this that Jesus arrived in Nazareth, his home of nearly thirty years. Of course he went into the synagogue, and very naturally he stood up to read. It was always customary to have seven persons take part in the reading of the law and the prophets, and a popular preacher was always welcome. The passage that Jesus chose (Isaiah, ch. 61) is, of all the many Messianic utterances of the Gospel Prophet, the one which most perfectly describes Christ's mission. Only the substance of his sermon is given: that this prophecy was fulfilled in him, that he was himself the Anointed One, that his coming was the inauguration of that period of which the jubilee year was a type (Lev., ch. 25) — a period of universal love and light and liberty.

It was the custom to wait after the sermon for questions, but apparently Jesus heard only low murmurs of altercation — some being touched by his gracious words, others contemptuous because the Speaker was only the Carpenter whom they all knew. Therefore Jesus went on to remind his hearers that there was precedent in their own history for their missing the blessing he came to bring: the most beneficent works of Elijah and Elisha had been done for aliens. They were stung by the reproach which he did not utter — the likeness that they saw between themselves and unbelieving Israel of former times; and rushing upon him with the quick fury characteristic of this people, they dragged him out of the synagogue and to the brow of the precipice that falls off fifty feet into the valley below. But they could not kill him. There was about our Lord an

indescribable majesty and dignity that protected him like a suit of magic armor : it made the Jewish officers quail (John 7 : 44, 46) and the Jewish rulers stay their murderous hands (8 : 59), it sent the heathen soldiers backward to the ground, and awed even imperious Pilate to a certain gentleness (18 : 38, 39 ; 19 : 8, 12). Now, he simply *passed through the midst* of the Nazarene mob and went his way.

Rejected by his own city, he made Capernaum his permanent home. This city, which dates not earlier than the Return, and of which the remains are barely now identified, was then an important government post. Near it passed one of the great highways ; at its feet lay the sparkling waters of the Sea of Galilee, bearing on its bosom an innumerable fleet of vessels, Roman war galleys, gilded pinnacles from the royal city, Tiberias, and fisher boats with their colored sails. All around it was outspread that "garden of abundance" that gave the name Genesareth to the lake. Here for a year and a half, at least, Jesus called it home ; here many of his mighty works were done. Some of our most precious memories of his life cluster around this city, "exalted to heaven" in the privilege of being the home of the Lord of Life.

## CHAPTER X.

### THE CALL OF THE FOUR, AND THE FIRST PREACHING TOUR.

Matt. 4: 18-23; 8: 2-4, 14-17; Mark 1: 16-45; Luke 4: 31b-44; 5: 1-16.

ONE thought is the golden thread on which the quickly succeeding events of this lesson may be strung like a group of precious pearls; namely, that they all are designed to exhibit "the saving benefits of the Kingdom of God." The work of Jesus at this time was to teach *and to show* that the Kingdom of God *was beginning to be set up* (Mark 1: 15).

Jesus had spent some little time in Capernaum (Luke 5: 1 indicates this) preaching and teaching in that town and the neighboring villages, finding, no doubt, much refreshment in the occasional society of his friends James and John, Andrew and Peter, who were now engaged in their regular duties as fishermen. Perhaps he now and then paused as he went out of the city by the seashore gate to speak a few gracious words to the tax collector Matthew, who afterward so eagerly obeyed his call. Surely he was sought out by the grateful nobleman whose son he had saved, and perhaps in his refined family circle, and the acquaintanceship which it brought him of Joanna and Susanna and other women of position (Luke 8: 3), he found a sweet relief from the coarseness and the rude ways of the common people. For Jesus, we must remember, was a man most refined, most modest, most sweet in mind; it was not *a trial* to him to associate with the unrefined and uncultured; because he loved them so much, and himself so little; but he was none the less susceptible to the refreshment of congenial society. Now the time had come to organize the nucleus of that Kingdom of God which he had announced; to form a little society of men who should not

only aid him in preaching its Gospel, but in their lives and acts should exemplify "the manner of the kingdom" (1 Sam. 10:25). He therefore called four men, three at least of whom had been his pupils and intimate companions, to give up their worldly calling and devote their lives to him. He pre-faced this call with a miracle, that of a great draught of fishes, which had a double significance. Unconnected with humanity, it served to show his supremacy over nature; it had also a symbolical meaning, as Jesus showed in his word to Peter, *from henceforth thou shalt catch men.*

In view of this proof that even in the sphere where Peter was most proficient, Jesus had a power undreamed of by him, it is not surprising that this impulsive fisherman should exclaim, *Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!* (Luke 5:8). He had already shown a strong faith in the wise judgment of Jesus in his *Nevertheless at thy word I will* (verse 5). But such an exhibition of *power* was also to one enlightened by faith a revelation of a *holiness* so pure, so perfect, so awe-inspiring, so in contrast with his own soul, that Peter was frightened at the thought of the presence of Jesus. But Jesus turned his stormy excitement into a purpose of service, reassuring his half-superstitious fear; even he might now ally himself for life with the work of Christ.

We are not to be surprised that these four fishermen immediately obeyed his call; the striking circumstance was rather that having once been permitted to live with him in free companionship, they had before been ready to leave one so altogether lovely and go back to self-supporting toil. *That* must have been a severe test of obedience, as well as a needed discipline of their impatience; now their reward has come: they may forsake all and follow him. Yet it probably was no mean prospect of affluence that they forsook. The fish trade of the Sea of Galilee was at this time one of the most important commercial interests of Palestine. A firm which besides five partners required also the services of hired servants (Mark 1:20)

must have been doing business on a large scale, and the history of the early church shows that these were men of no common ability. They made deliberate choice of poverty for the sake of the fellowship of Jesus; this, rather than their obedience, is the lesson of this event. True, they doubtless anticipated a reward in the kingdom, and we expect a reward in heaven, but they were ready to suffer hardship and poverty for the sake of the kingdom. Are we?

The Sabbath following the explicit call of these four men which was the first step in the organization of the Kingdom of heaven, Jesus entered upon that course of miracles which gave a peculiar witness to its nature and to his own functions as its founder. He had spent a considerable time in teaching, and yet the people of Capernaum had not ceased to wonder that *he taught with authority*; now he also *commanded the evil spirits with authority*, casting out a demon from one possessed (Mark 1: 22-27). In both respects he was entirely unlike any who had preceded him. The scribes, to whom pertained the duty of teaching the Scriptures, always deferred to the authority of others, to traditions and to noted teachers who had preceded them; Jesus, in his teaching, exerted a royal liberty to reject traditional interpretations and to put his own meaning into the words of Scripture, enlarging their scope in a way that the wisest rabbi could never have dreamed of, and yet that the candid hearer could not refuse to accept. But no rabbi, no prophet, had ever dreamed of commanding evil spirits. This was indeed *a new teaching* — a new revelation of divine power.

The demon testified to Jesus, but Jesus would not then and never would accept such testimony. It was impossible that unclean spirits could know anything of the real character of the Holy One of God. It was not the testimony but the obedience of the demon that caused the fame of Jesus to be everywhere rumored abroad.

That he was Lord not over demons only but over *all manner of disease* (Matt. 4: 23) he at once proceeded to show by healing

Peter's wife's mother of a *great fever*, by a single word and touch of her hand. These two acts were enough. The inhabitants of Capernaum could hardly wait for the sacred Sabbath time to be closed by the going down of the sun, before they besieged Peter's house, in which Jesus was staying, bringing with them all their sick and those that were possessed with demons. And then and there he gave them a striking witness to the nature of his Messiahship, by fulfilling in their sight the prophecy of Isaiah (53:4), *Himself took our infirmities and bare our diseases* (Matt. 8:17).

It was precisely because that Sabbath had been more than ordinarily crowded with work that Jesus *rose up a great while before day* and departed into a solitary place to pray. He needed the refreshment of communion with his Father. Those of us are poor indeed who have not found in a beloved companionship a more real rest, a more potent refreshment than either food or sleep. And if we know this, how much more he, to whom the Father was incomparably more than the dearest friend is to us.

The secret of the marvelous activities which Jesus exhibited was prayer — communion with God. "I live by the Father" was a physical as well as spiritual fact, and in this truth as in other things he is our Exemplar: it was the human Jesus who was rested in body and prepared for a long preaching tour by a period of early morning prayer.

Of course the people of Capernaum would gladly have kept this miracle-worker with them: the four disciples, fancying that this was a hopeful sign of the progress of the Kingdom, would have had him return to them. But the witness had been given to them, the good tidings that the Kingdom of God had actually come, and he must preach this gospel to other cities also. Accompanied by his disciples he therefore made an extensive tour, teaching, that is, expounding the Scriptural teachings as to the Messiah, preaching, that is, announcing the kingdom, and performing miracles. The last, we must bear in mind,

was a very clear proclamation of himself as Messiah. It was very generally believed that the Messiah would be proved by his miracles (Matt. 11:4; John 7:31; 11:47, 48); and it is a mistake to think that Jesus had any desire to hide the fact that he was the Messiah; he did desire to have the true character of the Messiah recognized, and therefore all his acts were designed to correct misapprehension and to show that true character.

For this reason he welcomed an early opportunity to heal a leper because, next to the casting out of demons, it gave the most significant illustration of his power. Leprosy had been from the earliest Mosaic legislation, a type of sin; and from its loathsomeness and inveteracy its cure was a signal witness to the power of Jesus. The special point brought out by the cure of this leper was the character of the leper's faith; he had absolutely no reason to hope for a cure except in the Messianic power of Jesus; but he had not the slightest doubt of his power. *If thou wilt, thou canst.* And in Christ's quick reply, *I will*, we learn what is his disposition toward all human woes.

He who taught us to pray, first, *Thy kingdom come*; and then, *Thy will be done*, has given us in these words a warrant to expect all good results in answer to our prayer of faith, when our personal desires are subordinated to the progress of the Kingdom.

That the leper was bidden to testify not in words, but by a deed which could not be called in question, shows that Jesus would not have those who entered his Kingdom throw off their usual religious obligations, and taught those present that miracles were not in themselves essential features of the Kingdom, though the necessary witness to it. And one striking teaching of this passage is that the disobedience of this leper, far from redounding, as he doubtless fancied it would, to the glory of Jesus, robbed him of the common comforts he might have enjoyed (Mark 1:45) and drew upon him the envious watchfulness of the scribes and Pharisees.



## CHAPTER XI.

### THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES FINDING FAULT WITH JESUS.

Matt. 9:2-17; Mark 2:1-22; Luke 5:17-39.

THE whole summer seems to have been spent in the preaching tour, but with the closing in of winter, Jesus *was come home* to Capernaum. These months had been a period of ever growing popularity. His miracles of kindness, his gracious words, his lovely character, gentle, strong and utterly self-forgetful, above all, his proclamation of *the kingdom*, had drawn great numbers about him. Naturally this attracted the attention of the scribes and Pharisees, for the former were the educated class, whose especial duty it was to teach and to interpret the Scriptures, and the other were the peculiarly pious class, zealous for the law as was Saul of Tarsus once, and careful of its observance to the smallest tittle. Their name, which means *separate*, and is equivalent to *Puritan*, shows what was their notion of the true nature of righteousness.

From this time until his crucifixion, the attention of these two classes was concentrated upon Jesus, at first with unsympathetic scrutiny, and afterward with ever growing hostility. Even so early as this, members of both bodies had come from Judea and Jerusalem to Galilee with intent to watch him closely. Our present study shows how want of sympathy was developed into open censure on three occasions and for three different reasons.

This is the historical aspect of this lesson: its spiritual meaning is no less important; the lesson *shows the true nature of repentance and its place in the kingdom of heaven*. Up to this point the teachings of Jesus, in word and in deed, had

touched mainly the fact of the kingdom and its general nature ; the events now studied reveal one of its fundamental principles.

Whether the home of Jesus in Capernaum was with his mother or with Peter, the house was so crowded by those who heard of his return, that not only the court, around which one or more dwellings were built, but the narrow entrance leading to it was crowded, and even the narrow street before the door. In the most convenient seats, doubtless, were the scribes and Pharisees, while Jesus probably stood in the view and hearing of all upon the gallery that surrounded the court. A paralytic carried on his pallet by four friends was borne up the outer stairway to the roof, and having taken up the tiling which covered the gallery, the friends let down the pallet to the feet of Jesus.

From the account it would seem that the strongest motive of this man in coming was to hear the teachings of Jesus. His friends, indeed, may have simply desired his recovery, but it was the *teaching* (Luke 5 : 17) that the sick man wanted. What about the *kingdom*? How may I enter in? Jesus tells him at once. *Son* — that most endearing title — *thy sins are forgiven* (literally *are being forgiven*). This is an important fact of the kingdom : its members are *forgiven sinners*.

The scribes and Pharisees objected that Jesus was a blasphemer, because only God can forgive sins, but they — learned and righteous men — ought to have known that the Son of man had authority on earth to forgive sins. They were aware that the title, the Son of man, the true, the typical Man, belonged to the Messiah : Jesus used it in preference to the word Messiah, because the signification of that word had, as we know, been perverted. They knew that the Messiah must receive authority as God's representative. And so he proved before their eyes that he had this authority, by a word of command, as easy to say as the word of forgiveness, and no more potent, if he had it not, but at which the helpless man arose, lifted that whereon he had been lifted, and *went forth before them all*.

Up to this time Jesus had been as careful not to arouse opposition as not to permit false hopes. But now that he had openly proclaimed his authority to forgive sins, such caution would be needless. Those who longed for a kingdom the highest expression of which would be the forgiveness of sins would now be strongly attracted; those who desired a temporal kingdom would assuredly be repelled. His next step, therefore, was one which would without doubt strengthen the dislike of those who had before been unsympathetic, and as surely give hope and courage to a great number who up to this time had not dared to take to themselves the good tidings of the kingdom.

The publicans, or tax-gatherers, were a hated class, both because the system of imposts at this time was excessively minute and vexatious, and because it was a continual reminder that the nation was subject to Roman authority. The most despised of this most despised class were those who themselves sat at the place of toll, instead of hiring subordinates. Of these was *Levi of Alphæus*, better known to us as Matthew. His place of toll was by the seaside; he must often have heard Jesus preach to the multitudes gathered there, had probably witnessed the call of the four disciples, and longed, but without hope, to be permitted such a discipleship. Now, as Jesus was passing by, going to the sands for the better accommodation of the multitudes who resorted to him in consequence of his last miracle, he spoke to Levi, as he had probably often done before, but this time with the words, *Follow me*. Who but can feel something of the leap of heart with which *he forsook all and rose up and followed him*.

The feast which Matthew shortly made was given, we must believe, not so much to do honor to Jesus, as to give an opportunity to *publicans and others* who would not be likely to frequent the synagogue to sit down with him and hear his teachings. And now, at the open murmurings of the scribes and Pharisees, not within themselves, as before (Mark 2:8), but

to his disciples (for they did not even yet dare openly oppose him), he explained more fully the nature of the forgiveness of sins and of the character of his kingdom.

The Jews had believed and taught that the favor of God depended upon the condition of a man's heart; that a repentant man might be forgiven, and therefore called of God. Jesus showed that this truth was rather to be looked on from the reverse side. He first called the sinner to himself, and so made him a penitent; first assured him of the forgiving love of God, *Son, thy sins are forgiven thee*; and that man was bound to him for evermore in contrition and desire for obedience. It was *sinners* whom he had come to call *to the kingdom*; Matthew (9:13) and Mark (2:17) say nothing about repentance. His call then was the same that it had always been: into the kingdom. The *whole*, the righteous, were members of it already; they needed no call, for the Old Testament idea of righteousness included, not merely (like the Greek) conformity to law, but also a disposition to accept the will of God. By this test these murmuring scribes and Pharisees might, if they would, judge of the character of their own righteousness. The kingdom of God is "a kingdom of grace in order to be a kingdom of holiness." Repentance is its foundation, but its chief corner-stone is the love of God in Christ; it is those who are in, not those who are out, who repent of the sins that they have committed.

The scribes and Pharisees, having complained of his eating in bad company, went a step farther and complained of his not requiring his disciples to fast. In this matter they found it easy and expedient to gain the disciples of the Baptist to their side, though naturally these would be the friends of Jesus. The figure by which Jesus answered must have gone home to the hearts of those who had first heard their own Master use it, in joy at the "increase" of Jesus. Fasting, Jesus taught them, was the natural expression of sorrow, and therefore, by a figure, of repentance. But his disciples had reason for joy,

not sorrow. Their time of fasting would indeed come ; but sorrow in itself is no more moral than joy. It was useless to try to compress the new spirit of the kingdom into the old forms of a bygone time ; all that was valuable in the old would be injured, and the new itself destroyed. A new spirit, a new condition of things, must come with the setting up of the kingdom ; for this new forms must, in the nature of things, be found. It is indeed natural for men to prefer the accustomed ; natural to think that the old ways, old ritual, old forms are good enough. Christ did not say that this is a mistake ; he simply offered the new to those who would receive them.

## CHAPTER XII.

### THE SABBATH QUESTION : FIRST PLOTS TO KILL JESUS.

John, Chap. 5; Matt. 12:1-14; Mark 2:23-3:6; Luke 6:1-11.

WE have now come to a crisis in the life of Jesus. Distrust and disfavor had already been rife; the scribes and Pharisees had questioned his right to forgive sins, blamed him for eating with publicans and sinners, and for not conforming his new teachings to the old forms to which the people were accustomed. Now hostility became more pronounced and took on a new aspect.

The date of the visit of Jesus to Jerusalem narrated in John's fifth chapter, and the Feast which was its cause, are unsettled points. For our present purpose they are points of no moment; for whether slightly earlier or later, there is no doubt that the cure which Jesus performed at this time is properly grouped with the other events here included as marking a crisis in his history.

For some reason which is not told, Jesus had gone up alone to Jerusalem to attend this feast. While there, he went on the Sabbath to a noted pool near one of the city gates, called Bethesda (*the House of Mercy*), because of the health-giving properties of intermittent springs long since gone dry, like many others known to history.

Among the many sufferers gathered in the porticoes that surrounded this pool, to wait for the bubbling up of the springs, Jesus saw one who had been for thirty-eight years infirm, having, doubtless, outlived those relatives who might have been interested enough in him to watch with him and take advantage of the bubbling up of the waters. This helpless man Jesus healed with the words, *Arise, take up thy bed and walk*. His

prompt obedience immediately attracted the attention of the authorities, for to carry a bed was an infringement of the Sabbath law.

Now the Sabbath law of the Jews had come to be a very onerous thing. As given by Moses it was an indescribable blessing — a most civilizing as well as spiritualizing influence, making half-civilized men considerate of slaves and cattle, as well as giving them new views of the relations in which they stood to God. The Mosaic Sabbath taught the beauty of holiness, the power of sanctification, the sacred relief of rest after labor, and the sacred rights of the dependent.

During the Captivity the Sabbath had been the greatest comfort and blessing of the Jews, being almost the only part of their ritual which they could observe, and a very important means of keeping them separate from the heathen and of sustaining their national spirit. It was not strange that they came to prize it as one of their highest blessings, nor even that they began to hedge it with regulations and proscriptions, in which at last its true spirit was lost. Long before the time of Jesus the scribes had quite forgotten the Mosaic idea of the Sabbath in the rigorous formalism by which they had made it a burden too heavy to be borne. Petty rules as to the work one might do, the distance one might walk, the weight one might carry, the service one might render to the sick and suffering, or rather, the negative of all these, had wholly robbed it of its ideal character. It is very important to observe that in all the acts grouped under this lesson, and the similiar ones mentioned in the Gospels, *Jesus was deliberately trying to restore and to fulfill the divine ideal of the Sabbath*; to bring out of it its highest meaning, and make it once more the priceless boon to man that God had meant it to be. To do this he openly broke the rabbinical Sabbath laws.

One of these laws prescribed that no medical aid could be given to the sick, except where life was in danger; another that nothing might be carried, not even the smallest scrap

of parchment. In this act of healing both these laws had been broken, and the Jewish authorities were highly indignant. Much more was their indignation roused by the reason which Jesus gave for doing this kindness upon the Sabbath day, *My Father worketh even until now, and I work.* His act was in accordance with the divine order, for the beneficent works of providence and redemption did not cease on the Sabbath day.

But the self-justification of Jesus was more than this, as the Jews saw. Just as he had proclaimed his relation to the Temple by his first public act, he now proclaimed his relation to the Sabbath: that it was a part of his mission to restore the Jewish Sabbath observance to correspondence with the divine ideal. Not by a minute petty ritual, but by working the works of the Father is the Sabbath to be sanctified. More than this, Jesus now distinctly affirmed that as Messiah his relation to the Father was one of a peculiar Sonship, that he had power to interpret the Father's will as well as to do his works. All this, he said, they, the rulers and teachers of the people, ought themselves to have known both by the testimony of John the Baptist and by that of the Scriptures, which also testified of him. This arraignment of themselves, when they had thought to arraign him, had the effect naturally to be expected in the case of evil-disposed men; their hostility henceforth became open and inveterate.

Although the words, "and sought to kill him," of John 5: 16, are omitted in the Revised Version, and are obviously premature, it is certain that from this time the authorities kept a strict watch on Jesus. On his return to Galilee all his actions were observed, and when on a certain Sabbath day his disciples, walking with him through a wheat field, plucked a few of the ripe ears and ate them after rubbing off the chaff with their hands, their Master was at once taken to task for permitting a breach of the Sabbath. What they had done was in accordance with common law and custom, but being done on the Sabbath



it was a double breach of the rabbinic Sabbath law, which construed it to include both reaping and grinding.

Jesus had met the attack upon himself (in Jerusalem) by a statement of his own character and mission. He met this attack upon his disciples with a fourfold answer. The history of the Jewish people (1 Sam. 21 : 1-6) taught that the law of necessity was higher than the law of ordinances; the very legislation of Moses taught (Num. 28 : 9) that the law against Sabbath work was not without qualification; the character of God as proclaimed by himself (Hosea 6 : 6) taught that the inward grace was of far more value than mere outward observance, and finally, he himself claimed to be Lord even of the Sabbath, not for the reason which he had given to the Jews at Jerusalem, that he was the Son of God, but because he was the Son of Man, the typical, the ideal Man.

By this answer he in no sense destroyed or abrogated the Sabbath, *he fulfilled it*, pouring into it all its richest meaning, making it the priceless boon which in the mind of God it had been when he raised the custom of many nations of a seven days' rest to the dignity of a sacred observance, an act of worship. The sacred rest day was given to subserve the very highest needs of man; whatever subserves them is lawful, whatever has no bearing upon those needs is a breach of the Sabbath, though no work at all were done.

As in Jerusalem, so here, inveterate prejudice prevented the entrance of light into the minds of the Pharisees and scribes. They of Jerusalem would not receive the glorious truth that the Messiah for whom they looked was the divine Son of God, because their minds were fully made up as to the kind of Messiah they wanted. These Galilean Pharisees were just as stubbornly determined not to receive his teachings of the royal law of liberty, the divine ideal of the Sabbath, because they were wedded to their traditional interpretations of the Mosaic law. No longer passively hostile, they now determined to accuse him, they seized the first opportunity of making

“ a test case ” by bringing to his notice a man with a withered hand (a malady not endangering life, and therefore not “ lawful ” to heal on the Sabbath day), who had come to the synagogue with no thought of being healed, but simply to attend the service. Jesus first carried the matter into the domain of morals : *Is it lawful on the Sabbath day to do good or to do harm ?* He next brought it into the realm of practice : if one of them has a sheep fallen into a pit on the Sabbath day, he will lift it out ; he will show that he knows *it is lawful to do good on the Sabbath day*. But how much is a man of more value than a sheep ! And thirdly, his questions being unanswerable, he healed the man, but *without breaking even the minutest point of the Sabbath law*. “ Stretch forth thy hand ! ” No law could forbid such an act ; but the man did it, and was healed, healed by a power which made the impossible possible. By no possibility except of faith could the man even *try* to stretch forth his hand. By no power but that of Jesus could he have obeyed Jesus’ command. The proof that the Son of Man was Lord of the Sabbath was as irrefragable as the proof (Chapter XI) that the Son of Man had power on earth to forgive sins.

They were past wishing to be convinced, past being willing to be convinced. Now they threw off the mask. The Jewish Sanhedrin had no criminal jurisdiction in Galilee, and rather than acknowledge their Messiah they would join those whom they hate with inveterate hatred, the Herodians, who desire the subjection of the Jews to Rome, and take counsel with them how they might destroy him (Mark 3 : 6).

## CHAPTER XIII.

### THE CHOOSING OF THE TWELVE.

Matt. 4: 23-25; 10: 2-4; 12: 15-21; Mark 3: 7-19a; Luke 6: 12-19.

THE second period of Christ's ministry in Galilee extended probably from the early summer of A.D. 28 to the following Passover, April 18, A.D. 29. By this time he had distinctly announced his own character and the character of the kingdom. He claimed the title of Son of Man, which was perfectly well understood to be a title of the Messiah; he performed the attesting miracles which were expected of the Messiah. But he raised the character and functions of the Messiah into an altogether higher sphere than that which the Jews had attributed to that personage. As Lord of the Sabbath, as exercising divine power to forgive sins, he claimed to be the interpreter of the divine law as it applied to men, and the interpreter of the divine attitude toward mankind. He claimed, in other words, to be the Revelation not only of God but of man. To say of the kingdom, moreover, that it consisted of forgiven sinners contradicted the fundamental Jewish ideas regarding its constituency.

From this time forth the authorities were accordingly bent on the destruction of his influence — not necessarily his death, but his suppression. But either was difficult because the popularity of Jesus had now become something amazing. Multitudes came to him, not only from Galilee, where he was personally known and had performed astounding miracles, and from Judea, where he had taught and had been publicly proclaimed, but also from Idumæa, and from the wealthy and cultured Greek centres of the Decapolis beyond Jordan (which included Damascus), and from Phœnicia on the Mediterranean coast. The excitement concerning him was very great, and

partly as a sifting process, partly because the multitude would thus be more manageable, Jesus withdrew into the country. Knowing as he did that the disfavor of the scribes and Pharisees equaled the admiration of the multitude, it is very impressive that he now took a step which tended at once to moderate the enthusiasm of the people and to intensify the disfavor of the authorities. That is, he deliberately *organized his kingdom* by selecting twelve men from among the multitudes of those who had cast in their lot with him, henceforth devoting himself to their education and training. But from this time his public work and teaching, though a means to their training, were always subordinated to this end. It is not a minor matter that the Twelve were *chosen* by Jesus (John 15:16). Multitudes came to him voluntarily and followed him gladly; there were some who even asked to be ranked among his special followers (Matt. 8:19, 21), but the number of these, and the individuals who made up their number, were the subject of a careful, well-considered choice, after months of acquaintance and study of their characters, and after a long night of counseling with his Heavenly Father.

Four lists of the Apostles are given us, two by Luke (see Acts 1:13) and one each by Matthew and Mark. No two are precisely alike, but all have certain points in common, such as the grouping in fours with the same names in each group differently arranged, but in all cases headed by the same names.

Simon stands at the head — him whom Christ on first seeing surnamed the rock (John 1:42). He was the most genuine, the most human of all the disciples, warm-hearted, enthusiastic, impetuous; self-forgetting, yet artlessly self-conscious; intuitive, but not logical; sympathetic, but not tenacious of will; intense in devotion; always ready either to speak or to act; liable to err, but quick and whole-souled in repentance; such was Peter, who through an absolute self-surrender became the rock whom Jesus made the corner-stone of his work. He preached widely among Gentiles as well as Jews (1 Cor. 1:12;

Gal. 2 : 11), and tradition says that he suffered martyrdom at Rome.

The brothers James and John were in many respects similar; intense, fiery, quick-tempered, tenacious, energetic, the very antithesis or complement of Peter in these respects, but like him in intensity of love, in quick response to the thought and mood of Christ. Less self-forgetful than Peter (Matt. 20 : 21), but not less devoted to their Lord, they were, with Peter, his congenial and most intimate companions. To James came the honor of being the first Apostolic martyr (Acts 12 : 2); to John that of living longest to testify of the work and character of Christ, and of writing a Gospel, three epistles (perhaps), and the Apocalypse. He was exiled to Patmos probably under Domitian and died at a great age in Ephesus.

Of Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, we know little except that he brought his brother to Jesus (John 1 : 41). He seems to have been peculiarly approachable (6 : 8), and yet slow to put himself forward. Tradition says that he preached in Thrace or in Scythia, and suffered martyrdom in Achaia.

Philip was a townsman of Andrew and Peter. He seems to have been earnest and ready to believe (John 1 : 45) and glad to have others believe (12 : 21), but slow to think (14 : 8, 9); it was, perhaps, for that reason that Jesus asked him the question of John 6 : 5. Tradition says he preached the Gospel in Phrygia. He is mentioned in Acts 1 : 13, but is not the same as Philip, the evangelist, spoken of in the subsequent narrative.

Nathanael (John 1 : 45) was the friend of Philip and brought by him to Jesus. In the lists of the Apostles Bartholomew is always associated with Philip, and as this is not a name, but a surname (the son of Talmai), there is little question that he is Nathanael. He is said to have preached in India (whither he carried a Gospel of Matthew) and in other parts of Asia, and to have suffered martyrdom in Armenia.

Thomas is called Didymus in Greek, both his names meaning

“the twin,” and as he is always mentioned with Matthew, it has been thought not impossible that they were brothers. He is the representative of the critical spirit, the honest doubter, earnest, inclined to melancholy and to discouragement (John 14 : 5), yet loyal even to death (11 : 16), joyful to find himself mistaken and to give himself up to the truth (20 : 24–28). He is said to have preached in Parthia, or in Persia, to have been pierced to death by lances, and to have been buried at Edessa. Two apocryphal works are associated with him.

Matthew, the publican, possibly a renegade Levite (Luke 5 : 27), certainly lax in patriotism, seems to have been entirely made over by Jesus. He turned to account the facility with the pen acquired in his worldly calling, by giving to the world the priceless boon of a written record of our Lord's life. He is said to have preached in Judea fifteen years, and afterwards in Parthia, Media, and Persia.

James the Little (with reference to stature, not prominence) was the son of Alphæus, or Clopas, whom one tradition makes a brother of Joseph, the husband of Mary. His mother was one of those who followed Jesus in his last journey, to the cross (John 19 : 25) and to the tomb (Luke 24 : 10). He is said to have labored and been crucified in Egypt.

The “three-named” disciple is Judas, the son, or brother, of James (Luke 6 : 16). He is surnamed Lebbæus (Matt. 10 : 3, A. V., the man of heart or courage), and Thaddæus (praise). The only clew to his character besides his surnames is that in John 14 : 22, where he shows himself to have imperfectly apprehended the teachings of Jesus. There is no trustworthy tradition as to his later life.

Simon, the Kananæan, or Zealot, had formerly belonged to a body of fierce patriots, whose war cry was, “We have no king or master but God,” and whose ungovernable enthusiasm finally brought on the destruction of Jerusalem. If he was already a member of the band at the time of the insurrection

mentioned in Acts 5 : 36, he must have been some twenty years older than Jesus. He also was a son of Alphæus, and therefore brother of James the Little and (probably) Judas. Tradition says that he was Bishop of Jerusalem after the martyrdom of James the Just (the Lord's brother), that he led the Christians to Pella before the destruction of that city, and was crucified at the age of 124.

Judas Iscariot is the dark problem of the Apostolic group. Yet we must remember that our Lord's choice of the Apostles *did not destroy their free will*, and that each one of the Twelve was open to temptation ; Judas had the same possibilities of good that the others had. His master-passion was covetousness. The mistaken ideas of the nature of Christ's kingship and kingdom which he shared with all the Apostles, and especially with Simon Zelotes and even with James and John, were never corrected in his mind, as in theirs, by love and self-giving. He was, we may observe, the only Judean among the Twelve.

These were the disciples, witnesses of Jesus, chosen by him to be living "links in the fellowship" between himself and all believers. Five of them, probably, were bound to Jesus by relationship and gave him the strong support of family affection. At least three, Matthew, James, and John, were in prosperous circumstances, though all were unconventional men of the people. Not unlettered, for no Israelite was that, even in Galilee, but *unlearned* in rabbinical lore, their preconceived opinions were not a matter of intellectual pride, like those of the scribes, but easily gave way before new light. Simple in their habits, energetic, artless, sincere, plastic, they were the best possible material for that which Jesus needed to mould them to. Varied in temperament, habits, feelings, their mutual interaction was only less important than the moulding and inspiring influence of Jesus, in making them the ministers of a new covenant, the missionaries of a new Gospel, the foundation stones of the kingdom of God on earth.

## CHAPTER XIV.

### THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT.

Matt. 5:1—8:1; Luke 6:20-49.

IT was on one of the hilltops of the elevated land northwest of the Sea of Galilee that, having passed the night in prayer (Luke 6:12), Jesus selected his Twelve Apostles from a large multitude who had followed him (Mark 3:13-15). During this ceremony those not called retired to one of the plainlike reaches of the lower hill (Luke 6:17), where increasing numbers joined them, bringing their sick. Coming down to this level place after having appointed the Twelve, he healed their diseases, and then, retiring to a slight elevation where he could be seen by all, and seating himself, his twelve disciples clustered round him, and to them first, but also to the listening multitude, he gave *the law of the kingdom of God*.

The sermon occupies three chapters in Matthew, very much less in Luke. The third Evangelist, writing for Gentiles, gives the principles of the law and their general illustrations, but leaves out that large body of illustration drawn from the Mosaic law (Matt. 5:17-47) as being without significance to them, who knew nothing of that law. He leaves out also another section (chap. 6) based on the religious customs of the Jews. Two sections given by Matthew (6:19-34; 7:7-13) are found in Luke, not as a part of this sermon, but in a historic setting (Chapters 11, 12, 13), and were probably added by the first evangelist to what was spoken at this time, according to his habit of bringing together all the teachings of Jesus on a given subject.

As we find it in Matthew the sermon consists of a prologue (5:3-16), three Parts (5:17-48, chap. 6 and 7:1-23) and an



Epilogue (7:24-27); the following passage (7:28-8:1) is a brief account of the immediate impression created by the sermon upon the hearers.

The *prologue* (5:3-16) contains the nine Beatitudes (vss. 3-11), giving the *character* of members of the kingdom, and an epilogue (vss. 12-16) describing their *function* in the world. Two things may be noticed here: (1) This was not "a new teaching." Every one of these truths may be found in the Old Testament. (2) Christ is not here promising rewards for good conduct; the poor in spirit, the merciful, those who hunger and thirst after righteousness, the pure in heart, are not promised the kingdom, mercy, realized righteousness, or the vision of God as reward, nor are they assured that through the former they shall attain the latter; the two belong together; he that is the one *has* the other. Both parts of each beatitude are the actual character of the members of the kingdom. And their function (vss. 13-16) is to preserve and illuminate the world that God may be glorified and the kingdom thus extended.

As to the Law of the Kingdom (5:17-7:23) Jesus does not show that it supersedes the Law of Moses; it *completes it*. Verses 17-20 of Chapter 5 are, properly speaking, the text of the entire discourse; all the rest elucidates this statement. The principle is this: the kingdom of God is a kingdom of righteousness; and its demand is, therefore, for "the entire supremacy of righteousness in the inner man."

In these verses Christ raises into a higher realm the two cardinal ideas of Judaism, *the kingdom* and *righteousness*. The Jews believed, just as he taught, that the kingdom was to be one of righteousness, but their notions on both these points were entirely inadequate. Their notion of the kingdom was best expressed in Daniel 2:44: Israel was to subdue all nations and *then* make them righteous. But Christ's idea was, that men, *being righteous*, were of the kingdom in the very nature of things. Hence John's long preparatory ministry; hence his own long work of preparation in Judea, and afterward in Galilee.

The three years of his ministry were half expired before he instituted his kingdom by the appointment of his Apostles. Again, the Jewish notion of righteousness (expressed in Deut. 6:25) was the observance of all the Commandments. That of Jesus was an inward disposition of the heart, which being given the Commandments were necessarily observed. It was not — and this is a much neglected point — it was not because the righteousness of the scribes and Pharisees consisted chiefly in minute additions to the Mosaic legislation that Jesus said that the righteousness of members of the kingdom must exceed it. *All* principles of righteousness fall short, and all forms of righteousness are without worth, except as they meet the inward answer of the heart, “I delight to do Thy will, O my God.”

The passage (5:17-23) which we have called the text of the discourse (perhaps it may better be called its kernel) clearly strikes a blow at the very common error that Christianity absolves its followers from obedience to the Law. Jesus in this sermon did teach that the Law cannot be fulfilled and *therefore* we must look to him for salvation; he distinctly teaches that it *must* be fulfilled. True, fulfilling it is not the means of salvation, but the result; the sermon is addressed to those who are in the kingdom; not to those who are out of it; but those who are in are not absolved from obedience to Law; how can they be? *Thy Law is within my heart* is their true portrait.

This fact of the permanent obligation of the Law of God receives a threefold illustration and application in the three Sections of the sermon. The First (Matt. 5:21-48) tests and elucidates Christ's principle of *heart righteousness* by applying it to six different cases of Mosaic teaching, respecting murder (vss. 21-26), adultery and divorce (vss. 27-32), oaths (vss. 33-37), retaliation (vss. 38-42), and the treatment of enemies (vss. 43-47), with a summing up of the whole (vs. 48). Jesus is not here condemning rabbinical additions to the Mosaic Law; with the single exception of the words, *and hate thine*

*enemy* (vs. 43), every teaching which Jesus passes under review is found in the Old Testament. Far from abrogating these teachings, he does not condemn them; he fulfills, completes them, carries them up to those highest terms which are necessarily theirs when the *heart* accepts them and finds them, as Paul did, not only holy, just, and good (Rom. 7:12), but also spiritual (14). And having applied his principle of heart obedience to them all, he gives the secret of the power of this obedience (Matt. 5:45). He who is a son of God has an essential likeness to God; this it is which makes the keeping of the law his natural condition. And therefore he closes this section with verse 48, which, whether read as a command (A. V.), or a promise (R. V.), is equally cogent, perfection being neither a work nor a belief, but a *state*.

In the Second Section (Chapter 6), the same principle of heart righteousness is illustrated, not from the Law, but from the *religious practices* of the Jews. The most important of these were almsgiving (1-4), prayer (5-15), and fasting (16-18), as the expression of piety, spirituality, and sanctity. All these are characteristic of the members of the kingdom, but not as external acts. They are the manifestation of an inward condition. Out of this view of religious practices arises the truth that the entire life of the member of the kingdom is *for God*; and the concluding passage (19-34) expands the meaning of that truth in its application to the one absorbing interest of human life, the provision for its sustenance. It is impossible for the member of the kingdom to make this his chief interest (25), nor is it necessary (32). The kingdom of God and his righteousness is the chief interest of the member of the kingdom (33); his temporal welfare is the concern of his heavenly Father.

Section Three (7:1-23) applies the principle of heart righteousness to the Christian's relations with men. Self-reformation must, in the nature of things, precede our attempts to reform others if those attempts spring from a heart righteousness.

Like Section Two, this section is divided, verses 13–20 being the practical application of the truth to the Christian: the test of this heart righteousness is its fruits; men cannot remain sinners who have been called to the kingdom. The subject is completed in 21–23 by being brought round to the text (5:17), the necessity of obedience to the Law. The Epilogue follows (vss. 24–27). The kingdom, being established in righteousness, is built upon the rock; without righteousness the foundation is but sand.

Such teachings as these naturally excited the surprise of those who heard, accustomed to the teachings of the scribes. He taught *with authority*, not merely because he did not base his teachings on those of any predecessor, but because he did not at all pretend to justify them. He did not argue nor reason; he simply spoke the words as irrefragably true. The witness was in the words and in those who heard them.

## CHAPTER XV.

### THE SECOND PREACHING TOUR.

Matt. 8:5-13; 11:2-19; Luke 7:1-8:3.

HAVING organized the kingdom, and promulgated its law by a single miracle, Jesus taught who are its members. Immediately after preaching the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus returned to Capernaum (the story of the leper, Matt. 8:2-4, is evidently misplaced). He had hardly reached home when he was met by a deputation of elders from the synagogue, begging him to go and heal the slave of a Roman centurion. The accounts in Matthew and Luke differ in detail, though it is not difficult to find in Matthew room for the fuller details of Luke.

This centurion was at the head of a company of (about) one hundred Roman soldiers, who were stationed at Capernaum under Herod's authority. In general, such an officer would be the subject of Jewish detestation; this Roman was, however, honored and respected. Though not a Jewish proselyte, there is no reason to doubt that he belonged to that considerable circle of "devout" Gentiles of whom we find many in the Acts (10:2, 7; 13:50; 17:4, 17), who ever formed the most fruitful ground for the Gospel seed—men and women who had seen the futility of their national beliefs, and instead of swinging off into blank atheism like a great number of thoughtful heathen, had turned with sympathy to the beliefs, though not to the laws of ritual, of Judaism. Associated as he was with Herod's court, he assuredly knew of the healing of the nobleman's son (John 4:50) by Jesus from a distance, and probably he had not expected that Jesus would actually come to his house. When he learned that he was approaching, he gave

evidence both of faith and of humility — leading characteristics of the members of the kingdom (Matt. 8:8). *I am not worthy, . . . say the word and my servant shall be healed.* And the figure with which he illustrated his faith showed that it was thoroughly intelligent — he himself could control certain events at a distance by a word of command; how much more had Jesus control over the invisible forces of disease.

One of the commonest anticipations of the Messianic kingdom was of a great feast where all Israel would sit down with Abraham and Isaac and Jacob, with no Gentile admitted. And Gentiles were to be cast into Gehenna the place of darkness. The faith of this centurion showed how possible it was that the Gentiles should come into the kingdom, while Israel, the natural *sons of the kingdom*, failed of their birthright and were cast out.

Soon after this Jesus set out upon a second tour through Galilee. It was like the first one, which he took immediately after the call of the first four disciples (Chapter X), but with a difference; then he was comparatively unknown — now his fame had spread everywhere abroad; then he was received with universal enthusiasm — now, though the enthusiasm was no less, there was dark opposition in the hearts of the Jewish authorities; then the Gospel was proclaimed that the kingdom of God was at hand — now that kingdom had been organized, its law given, and its members described; then he was attended only by a few, his chosen ones — now, in addition to the Twelve, *a great multitude* (Luke 7:11) followed him, some of whom had avowedly taken upon themselves to *minister of their substance* to the wants of Jesus and the Twelve.

Their first halt seems to have been Nain “the Fair,” a village about twenty-five miles southwest of Capernaum, between historic Endor and Shunem, on a hill slope looking over the broad plain of Esdraëlon. It was evening, the hour for interments, and just before reaching the town they met a funeral procession. First came the mother of the dead, then

an open wicker casket carried by several bearers, then the hired mourners, and lastly, *much people of the city*, for it was the duty of every one, however engaged, to rise up and join a funeral procession. According to custom, Jesus and his company would have stood reverently on one side to allow the mourners and the bier to pass, and then have fallen in with the procession. Instead of that, he spoke compassionately to the mother, *Be not weeping!* and touched the open coffin. To touch it was to contract defilement; no one would do it except in case of necessity. But the Lord of life had no fear of defilement; with one word of command he recalled the dead to life. The pious mourners felt not only awe at this wonderful event, but joy, because thus *God had visited his people*. But to those who believed on him its meaning was that Jesus, their Lord and Master, had power over the unseen forces, not of disease only, but of death — that he was the Lord of life.

The fame of this miracle reached the Baptist in his prison in the lonely fortress of Machærus, in the rocky fastnesses beyond the Dead Sea. Here, for about half a year, that free son of the wilderness had been languishing. No wonder that the clear eye of his soul had become dimmed, if not with an awful doubt, at least with an urgent impatience. But even so, to none but Jesus would he appeal. Those of his disciples who still remained faithful were permitted to visit him in his prison; two of them he sent to Jesus with the question, *Art Thou the Coming One, or do we wait for another?*

The Jews did not often call the Messiah the Coming One, but they did so designate the Messianic kingdom, and the question evidently meant, *Art Thou He who shall inaugurate that kingdom?* So in answer Jesus did some of the acts that, according to prophecy (Isaiah 61 : 1 ; 35 : 5), characterized that kingdom, sending a report of these acts to John by way of answer, adding a new beatitude, *Blessed is he whosoever shall not be scandalized (find occasion of stumbling) in Me.*

How tender Jesus was of his forerunner's reputation is seen

by his beginning at once to remind those about him of their former great enthusiasm for John, adding those words of highest encomium, *Among them that are born of women there is none greater than John*, for with him began the fulfilment of long ages of prophecy, the preparation of the way of salvation. Here, again, Jesus emphatically declares his own Messiahship, not only by his message to John, but by clearly telling his hearers that (to them who would receive it) John was actually the Elijah prophesied of by Malachi (4:5). How incalculable are the privileges of the kingdom is shown from the words that follow: *He that is but little in the kingdom of God is greater than he. The people and the publicans* who had been prepared by the baptism of John were able to accept this teaching, but *the Pharisees and the lawyers*, in whom no such preparatory work had been wrought, would not receive it, but *rejected for themselves the counsel of God*. Their inconsistency was exposed by Jesus in a few scathing words (Luke 7:31-35).

We do not know in what part of this second tour the messengers from John had found Jesus, nor in what town it was that the Pharisee invited Jesus to dine with him. This Pharisee was certainly not one of those who were plotting against Jesus. His negligence of the usual courtesies was not due to intentional rudeness, but simply to carelessness; he was one who cared little for punctilio.

Such feasts as these were always held with open doors, and there was always a group of lookers-on. It was not difficult for the repentant sinful woman to come in with her *alabastron* of precious ointment. She had meant only to show Jesus honor by pouring the ointment on his feet as he reclined upon the couch with his unsandaled feet extended away from the table; but when she saw him, repentance unloosed the flood-gate of her tears. It was to Simon's unspoken thought that Jesus *answered* with his parable of the two debtors. The meaning of the little parable was plain. Neither debtor could



pay ; both were in precisely the same condition, though one owed much and one little ; both were freely forgiven. But she who felt the burden of her many sins loved much because she was much forgiven ; one who felt little need of forgiveness — and Simon recognized himself here — would naturally love little. Simon had not a word of answer. The other guests began to question how he could forgive sin. Jesus did not explain ; he simply bade the woman go in peace, her faith having saved her. We shall never know who she was ; she was certainly not Mary of Bethany (Luke 10 : 39), nor Mary of Magdala (8 : 2), but she holds the beautiful place of being the very first, so far as we are told, who came to Jesus simply for forgiveness, with no disease to be healed, no friend to be restored, no danger to be averted.

## CHAPTER XVI.

### A DAY OF TEACHING BY THE SEA OF GALILEE.

Matt. 12:22—13:53; Mark 3:19b—4:34; Luke 8:4—21; 11:14—36.

ON his *coming home* (Mark 3:19b, margin) from his second preaching tour through Galilee, Jesus found himself more popular than ever, the thronging multitudes giving him no time even to eat bread (vs. 20). Some of his friends (there is no hint that they are of his immediate family; they were probably of those who devoted themselves to looking after his welfare) undertook to check this intense activity which seemed to them more than human nature could endure, seeing in it even a token that his enthusiasm had already outrun his self-mastery.

The unfriendly scribes (Mark 3:22) and Pharisees (Matt. 12:24) seized upon the suggestion. Having failed to convict him of blasphemy (Mark 2:7) or of any breach of the Mosaic law (3:2ff, etc.), they now attacked his methods and motives. Among the cures performed at this time was that of a blind, deaf, and dumb demoniac; they at once exclaimed that Jesus was himself possessed by the archdemon, Beelzebul (using the name of a Phœnician divinity as an equivalent for Satan), by whose power he cast out demons. Jesus replied to this "truly diabolical accusation" with a masterpiece of logic, showing unanswerably the impossibility of Satan so turning against himself, and then shifted the attack from himself to them. The Jews were much given to exorcism (Acts 13:6; 19:13, 14); the "sons" (disciples) of the rabbis claimed to have this power; did they also cast out demons by the aid of Satan? No; for their own sakes it were better for them to admit that it was by the Spirit of God that he cast out demons, for so would follow the conclusion that the kingdom of God

had come to them; that Satan, the arch enemy, was being despoiled.

The argument was unanswerable; more than that, it led directly to the conclusion that in thus insulting Jesus they had insulted not him, but the Holy Spirit, to insult whom is in the nature of things to commit an eternal sin, since it is a deliberate refusal of the eternal blessing.

In the midst of his fiery rebuke the opportunity occurred to show how truly he was on the side, not of Satan, but of God. His mother and brethren stood outside of the thronging multitude, desiring to see him. It is an utter misconception, both of Jesus' character and of the circumstances, to see in his words (Mark 3 : 33-35) any rebuke of his mother or of his brothers; they were not present. Luke expressly says they could not come at him for the crowd, and he would certainly not offer them a gratuitous insult. Nothing in the record so much as hints that he did not at once obey the summons and go out to them. But before going he seizes (as his custom is) the opportunity to teach a truth. "You all know," he virtually says, "how dear are family ties to me, how much I love my mother and brethren! But these disciples of mine, and all who do the will of God, are dear to me as brother and sister and mother."

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At this period of Jesus' career, he began to teach by a new method — that of parable. Parabolic teaching was and is common in the East; but no teacher of any age or any country has at all equaled our Lord in the use of this method.

Briefly, a parable is a "narrative expressly imagined for the purpose of representing a religious truth in a pictorial figure." The parable differs from a fable in that it contains nothing grotesque and nothing contrary to nature; from an allegory in that the truth it teaches is actually *represented*, not merely *illustrated*. "I am the Good Shepherd" is not a parable, but an allegory. "A sower went forth to sow," and all that follows, has no allegorical meaning; it does not *illustrate*, it

*elucidates.* A parable differs from an allegory in this, that it aims to teach only a single important truth, to which all the details refer so far as they have any meaning; to try to find minor truths in the minor details is to misapprehend the nature of a parable. Hence it continually occurs that we find the parables of Christ coming in pairs, each teaching a truth complementary to the other.

Jesus began now to teach in parables because the time had come to advance from elementary teaching to the deeper truths of the kingdom. These truths were so new and difficult that if they had been clothed in ordinary language they would have been forgotten before the minds of the hearers had had time to take them in; humanly speaking, it would have been impossible that they should have been preserved and handed down to the Church had they not been clothed in a form which made it possible to remember not only their general features, but their minute relations.

There were other reasons for the adoption of this form just at this time. The multitudes who followed Jesus were attracted by many different motives; it was time that a sifting process began. But here we must be careful not to misapprehend Christ's purpose. The disciples, on hearing the first of his parables, that of the sower, asked him the same question we are now asking — why he taught in parables (Matt. 13 : 10). And he answered that the parable was a *veil* of truth, *not* to repel, but to attract: *if they could see* (vs. 13) what he meant, they would not perceive; if they could hear, they would not understand; but under this half concealment, the truth would find its way to their intelligence, and gradually win its own acceptance. The sifting process was *not* to winnow out those who followed him from selfish or false motives, but to win them to follow him from true motives.

Yet there was also a prohibitory side to this form of teaching in the nature of those who heard. There were those whose hearts were waxed gross and whose eyes were deliberately self-

closed (vss. 14, 15). The penalty of such sin is more sin; the power of seeing the beauty of spiritual things gradually becomes lost. And it was not in wrath, but in mercy, that Christ's teachings were henceforth such as these could not understand.

The eight parables with which Jesus opened this new method of teaching (Matt. 13 : 1-50 ; Mark 4 : 26-29) are designed to throw up into higher relief than in his earlier teaching the nature and progress of the kingdom of God, and its relations to various classes of men.

The parable of the sower shows the different reception given to the word of the kingdom by different classes of people, and that the establishment of the kingdom does not depend alone upon a work of divine power, as the rabbis taught, but that it requires also the free response of man. A parable complementary to this is given by Mark (4 : 26-29). The good seed was sown on good ground by human agency, and it brought forth fruit, being received into good and honest hearts ; but the fruit-bearing was not, like the receiving, an act of human volition — the sower has cast the seed, the prepared heart has received it, but while the sower sleeps and wakes it grows he knows not how, and is carried through all its stages of development by a power unknown to him.

The parable of the tares shows true and false Christianity existing in the kingdom side by side, and not distinguishable until the end, because the evil bears the appearance of the good. It was evidently given to reassure the Apostles and true disciples when they should see unworthy members in their own circle, as they only too speedily did, in Judas, and to teach them the proper line of conduct in such a case ; " let both grow together until the harvest."

The complementary parable of the dragnet fixes the mind on the end of things, the judgment day, with the lesson that his disciples are to so live as to abide the sifting of that day.

Another pair of complementary parables were spoken to the

multitude, the mustard seed and the leaven. Both exhibit the growth of the kingdom from small beginnings, but the former treats it *extensively*, the latter *intensively*; the mustard seed, becoming a tree in whose branches the birds come to lodge, shows how the kingdom, though small indeed in empire over the heart of man at that time, was yet to spread abroad over the world; the leaven in the meal shows its gradual, imperceptible, but unmistakable transforming influence upon character, both of the individual and the community.

Later, when withdrawn to the house, Jesus told to his immediate followers another pair of complementary parables, showing the incomparable value of the kingdom and of citizenship in it. It is like treasure hid in a field, discovered accidentally, but when found awakening a trembling eagerness to secure it at all sacrifice; or it is like a goodly pearl, found after long search by one who has made the search the business of his life, like the earnest seekers after truth, who when they find it hold all things else as of no worth beside it.

## CHAPTER XVII.

### A DAY OF MIRACLES BY THE SEA OF GALILEE.

Matt. 8 : 23-34 ; 9 : 18-34 ; Mark 4 : 35—5 : 43 ; Luke 8 : 22-56.

A FEW times in the Gospel history the story of an entire day is given ; standing out from a brief summary covering long periods of time. The Sabbath in Capernaum was one of these (Chapter XI) ; the day of teaching which we studied for our last lesson was one, and to-day we have a day of miracles. Evidently these days are given us as representative of Jesus' daily life, showing us that his days were usually as full of activity, of beneficence, as these.

The sun was gone down, and a new day was therefore begun, when Jesus, with his disciples, set out to cross the lake in search of quiet and repose.

Before the boat had gone far, a terrific squall came up. All lakes are liable to sudden squalls, but this one, lying in a deep, warm valley, nearly seven hundred feet below the sea, shut in by hills, deeply furrowed with ravines, down which the wind rushes madly from snowy Lebanon in the north, is subject to storms of unusual violence, amounting to hurricanes. There were at least four experienced sailors in this little bark, but even they gave themselves up for lost. With one accord the disciples rushed to Jesus, who was asleep in the stern, crying, " Master, Master, we perish ! "

Jesus heard the cry of despair and answered it with an appeal to their faith. This ought to have been enough to quiet them ; but their faith was unequal to the strain ; therefore he spoke to the elements and they obeyed him, and the storm became a calm.

We need not wonder that the disciples asked with awe, *Who,*

*then, is this?* We are used to the thought that our Saviour is lord over the powers of nature, but they had not before dreamed of such a thing. This was not one of the attributes of the Messiah, as they understood them.

A more familiar instance of his power was given immediately on their landing in the country of the Gerasenes, on the eastern shore of the lake — a country populated partly by Jews and partly by Syrians and wandering tribes, with occasional towns, mainly of Greeks and Syrians, federated in “the tencity alliance” (Decapolis, Matt. 4:25). These cities were somewhat widely scattered, and none of them was close on the lake. But no sooner had Jesus and his disciples landed than they were met by a wild figure, a raving maniac, naked and streaming with blood, and possessed of a tremendous strength in the paroxysms of his malady.

We have seen that it is not easy to understand precisely what is meant by demoniac possession. There is no suggestion that the demonized were peculiarly sinful; Jesus never asked for faith as a condition of healing them, and he seemed to have especially welcomed every opportunity to heal them. In this perhaps is a clew. From the very beginning of even the Baptist’s mission, *sin* is shown to be that which hinders the coming of the kingdom, and sin, we know, is “want of conformity to the will of God.” Now, without giving way to open sin, or to any form of sensual indulgence, it is entirely conceivable that men may be utterly opposed to the will of God, entirely bent on having their own will. Such a state of mind, or rather, of the affections, is the extreme opposite of the spirit of our Lord — “I delight to do thy will.” Such an opposition of the human will to God’s will naturally — perhaps necessarily — opens the door of the heart to evil influences, just as harmony with the divine will opens it to the Holy Spirit.

If this is so, then there must always, in all ages, be demonized men — men outwardly good or openly bad, but in either case opposed to the will of God, though the condition may not



always be evident to others. But it seems not unnatural that while Christ was upon earth this condition should make itself evidently manifest, simply because he was evidently manifested. And if that was the case, he would naturally desire especially to heal such; for thereby he would not only show that he was come to destroy that which so peculiarly hindered the coming of the kingdom, but by such miracles he would plainly witness, in a way and to a degree possible by no other miracle, to the nature of his Messianic calling — that he came to break down the power of sin and bring the minds of men into harmony with the will of God.

The chief point of difficulty in the healing of the Gerasene demoniac is in Christ's permitting the devils to enter the swine and destroy them. We may observe, however, that this man was so entirely dominated by the demons (actually identifying himself with them; Luke 8:30), that it may have been desirable, in order to convince him of his cure, that he should see some proof that the dreadful power was gone out of him; and it may also have been necessary to show him the terrible malevolence of evil spirits. As to why Jesus permitted so much property to be destroyed, we might as well ask the same question after every cyclone, or tornado, or great fire. God has the "right of eminent domain"; the salvation of a single soul is worth any amount of property in the sight of God, and of men, too, in proportion as they have the Spirit of God. The argument commonly offered in justification of this act that it was contrary to the Mosaic law for Jews to use swine flesh has no force. There is no reason to suppose that these swine were the property of Jews, and if they were, it was not our Lord's way to question the lawfulness of any tenure of property.

Jesus departed from his usual practice in bidding the man talk freely of his cure. The reason is not far to seek. No one knew Jesus or cared for the good tidings of salvation in this district; the man was made the first missionary; and with good effect, for though now the Gerasenes, superstitiously afraid of

his power or distressed by the loss of so much property, urged his departure, afterward Christ was welcomed here (Mark 7: 31-37).

On their return to Capernaum in the morning, Jesus and his disciples were met by a great number of people, among them a ruler of the synagogue, begging Jesus to heal his daughter who was at the point of death. As our Lord had often preached in the synagogue, Jairus must have known him and his works of healing; it is possible, even, that he was one of the elders who interceded with Jesus for the healing of the centurion's servant; if so, his faith and apprehension of the character of Jesus were far less than those of the centurion. Perhaps the very urgency of his love for his child made him weak in faith.

On the way to Jairus' house a woman, who for years had suffered from a disease which made all who touched her ceremonially unclean, came up behind Jesus and touched his garment, believing that this would suffice for her cure. It did; although her act spoke much of superstition Jesus commended her faith as in fact that which had gained her healing. "The religious value of faith is wholly independent of the more or less correct conception of divine things which is united with it."

Before their arrival at Jairus' house the little girl had died. The beautiful story is familiar — the hired mourners beating their breasts and wailing; the despair of the father checked by the Lord's kind word, *Fear not, only believe*; the putting out of all unsympathetic, mocking spirits; the quiet entrance of six persons in the death chamber — the parents, three disciples and Jesus — and the gentle words of power, *Little maid, arise!* There can be no doubt that the child was actually dead; unless Jesus were omniscient he would have been less qualified than those in the house to judge of her true condition. The secrecy of the miracle was partly for the child's sake, but also for the sake of others. We cannot think that it would be a merciful

thing to restore all dead persons to their weeping friends, and we do not hear of the dead being brought to Jesus to be restored, as would most certainly have been the case were this miracle widely known. It was not his intention to raise to life any more persons than sufficed to show unmistakably his power over death.

Immediately on leaving the house of Jairus, Jesus healed two blind men. It is a striking illustration of his perfect sympathy that in every case of blindness Jesus aids the *consciousness* of the afflicted ones by some appeal to the sense of touch. One blind man he takes by the hand and leads away; invariably he touches their eyes. So with the deaf man (Mark 7:33, 34), we shall find him making precisely the signs that would be made to a deaf mute to-day if it were desired to connect his healing with the idea of a person.

The activities of this busy day were concluded, so far as we know, by the healing of a dumb demoniac. Here again the Pharisees repeated their senseless and blasphemous accusation. But Jesus had refuted that once for all; he takes no notice of it here.

## CHAPTER XVIII.

### THE THIRD PREACHING TOUR.

Matt. 9:35—11:1; 13:54—14:12; Mark 6:1-29; Luke 9:1-9.

IT was very much according to human nature that the people of Nazareth should have found it hard on Jesus' return from his first absence from home (Chapter IX) to think of their fellow-townsmen as the Messiah. Their rejection of him on that occasion showed them to be dull-minded and brutal, but it did not perhaps argue them so guilty as appears to us who are familiar with the recorded facts with regard to Jesus' Messiahship. At all events, our Lord thought it was due them to give them one more opportunity. It was impossible that his fellow-townsmen should not now be aware of many of his deeds as well as of his enormous popularity and numerous adherents; he would now give them one more opportunity to acknowledge him. His sisters were living in Nazareth (Mark 6:3), having probably married before the removal of Jesus with his mother and brothers to Capernaum (John 2:12); it is possible that to visit them was one of his motives in going to Nazareth.

It is rather significant that we are told (Mark 6:1) that *his disciples follow him* to Nazareth. When last we heard of them, nine of the Twelve had been left outside the door of Jairus' house. It seems probable that Jesus observed some secrecy in leaving the house of Jairus. Perhaps he went "by the way of the roofs," as he afterwards counseled his disciples to do at the destruction of Jerusalem (Matt. 24:17). At all events, when he reached Nazareth he had so strong a bodyguard that anything like the violence offered him on his former visit (Luke 4:29) was impossible.

We are not told what it was that he said in the synagogue (Mark 6 : 2), but we see that the very objections made by the people of Nazareth — that they knew all about him and his upbringing and knew that he had had no superior advantages — were in fact proof that he had received a special endowment.

A celebrated scholar translates into French the last clause of verse 3 as, *And he was for them only a subject of criticism.* He was baffled, not by unbelief, but by a sneering, faultfinding spirit. There *is*, then, we learn from this incident, a limit to “the wideness of God’s mercy”; it is not in intellectual blindness, not in the lack of spiritual apprehension, not even in man’s sinful nature or conduct, but in his will; that being perverse, there is no hope. Here in Nazareth Jesus did just miracles enough to show that neither his power nor his compassion had failed, and then left them to themselves.

From Nazareth Jesus went about as he had twice before done (Chapters X and XV) on a preaching tour through the close clustering towns and villages of Galilee (Josephus says there were no less than 240). He saw that a crisis in his own life was approaching; the hostility of the Pharisees and the increasing enthusiasm of the multitudes would inevitably conspire together for this. This fact, as well as the condition of the people (Matt. 9 : 36), spiritually starved by their rabbis, who gave them stones for bread, led Jesus to take a step also called for by the needs of the training of the Twelve; *he began to send them forth by two and two* (Mark 6 : 7), as laborers in that harvest which showed itself to be so plenteous.

The commission of the Twelve on this occasion is given by all three Synoptists, but that of Matthew is very much longer and more comprehensive than those of Mark and Luke. A careful comparison, however, shows that all these are substantially alike to a certain point (Matt 10 : 5-15; Mark 6 : 7-11; Luke 9 : 1-5). What follows in Matthew treats of trials (vss. 17-23) to which certainly the Apostles were not now exposed, but which were subsequently their lot, giving reassur-

ances (vss. 24–32) and warnings (vss. 33–38) not yet needed and which would hardly have been appreciated by the Apostles at the time at which we have now arrived. Still, it was entirely appropriate for Matthew to follow here his usual plan of gathering together all that bears upon one idea. All that is here is fundamental to the idea of the Christian Apostolate, and it was all realized in the end.

At this time, we find, the field of the Apostles' labors was restricted to those *lost sheep of the house of Israel* (Matt. 10 : 6) whose neglected and prostrated condition had so moved our Lord's compassion (9 : 36). Neither the Samaritans nor the Gentiles were to have any part in their ministry. This was, of course, a temporary restriction (28 : 19), but it was essential so long as their Lord was on earth, because the nature of his Messiahship limited his personal labors to his own people, and the Apostles were now simple helpers in his present work. As to their preaching, it also was restricted.

They were to announce that the kingdom had come (10 : 7) and call men to repent (Mark 6 : 12), but they were not to announce the Messiah. Though entirely convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, they still, and until after the Ascension, entirely misunderstood the character of his Messiahship, and any teaching of theirs on this head must have been misleading. Nor were they to preach in the synagogues as Jesus did. For this they were not competent; their preaching was to be *as they went* (Matt. 10 : 7) from house to house. They were to seek out a well-disposed household (vs. 11) as a nucleus for their work.

It is important to notice that Jesus gave them directions as to their behavior — the courtesy, gentleness, wisdom (vss. 12, 16) that became the servants of God. It is also important to observe that his direction to make no provision for the necessities of the journey, while *in principle* of permanent obligation, was *in detail* applicable only to the time then present. They were going through a friendly country; to entertain

strangers was a duty, usually practiced with delight, and certain to be so in their case, as disciples and representatives of One so enthusiastically admired as Jesus was at this period. Later (Luke 22:35, 36) they received different orders.

They were not to force their mission upon any one; this was in part a temporary restriction, due, like the others, to their immaturity as religious teachers. But in part their work was conditioned, as with their Lord, by willingness to receive on the part of those who heard. The limit of the blessing, we here learn again, is in the will of man. The whole Gospel story hardly contains a more awful teaching. Though the latter verses of Matthew (10:39-42) are not given by Mark and Luke, they appear to be a part of this first commission. Verse 39 was not spoken on this occasion only; it is a favorite thought with Jesus. We find it six times in the Gospels, attributed to four different occasions (Matt. 16:25; Luke 17:33; John 12:25).

Having given them their commission, Jesus sent the Apostles forth by two and two, doubtless in the order given in Matt. 10:2-4. Probably they made but brief trips, returning often to Jesus, wherever he might be; he himself seems to have been occupied in breaking fresh ground (Matt. 11:1), which probably they afterward entered upon.

Their mission increased the fame of Jesus. *Herod, the tetrarch, heard of all that was done* (Luke 9:7) immediately on his return from his distant castle of Machærus, where he had been keeping his birthday. It is not surprising that he was *much perplexed*, for his conscience was disturbed. John the Baptist had long been confined in "the hot darkness" of the dungeon keep of Machærus. Herod, who (Josephus says) believed that John had political views, often called him to his audience and *heard him gladly* (Mark 6:20), that is, with the curious interest of one who enjoys a superficial excitement; notwithstanding the fact that John had boldly denounced his incestuous marriage with his brother's wife, Herodias — the

wife, not of the Tetrarch Philip, but of another brother of that name, who was living as a private man of wealth in Jerusalem. The story of how the wicked and unscrupulous woman compassed the prophet's death is both familiar and easy to comprehend; but it is difficult for us to understand the process of mind by which Herod, a Sadducee, and therefore a materialist (Acts 23:8), came to hold the curious belief that John, who in his lifetime did no miracle (John 10:41), "had graduated in another world," *and therefore do these powers work in him* (Mark 6:14). It was a morbid curiosity which made Herod desire to see Jesus, for whom he thus accounted (Luke 9:9), and not a spiritual, or even intellectual yearning. And therefore Jesus did not now respond to his desire, nor when at last, on the dreadful day of his trial, he was brought before Herod, would he gratify his curiosity by so much as a word, far less by the miracle for which he hoped (Luke 23:8, 9).



## CHAPTER XIX.

### THE CRISIS AT CAPERNAUM.

Matt. 14 : 13—15 : 20 ; Mark 6 : 30—7 : 23 ; Luke 9 : 10—17 ;

John, chap. 6.

THE death of the Baptist stirred the people to the very depths. He had announced the Messianic kingdom, had proclaimed Jesus as him for whom the nation was looking, and Herod had silenced his voice by murder. The whole people felt that the crisis had come. Would Jesus assert himself, and lead the people in the founding of the long-anticipated new order? They were more than ready for a great uprising if he would say the word. At a moment like this the Pharisees could only bide their time and see how things would turn.

Jesus, returning to Capernaum, was met by the disciples of John, who in the first bewilderment of grief and horror turned instinctively to him. Soon the dreadful news reached the Twelve, and they, too, hastened to Jesus.

In their train came eagerly expectant multitudes to swell the throng already gathered round him. It was a time of year when all the population was, so to speak, in a fluid state — the time just preceding the Passover — and this certainly added to the number of Christ's followers. He was the "idol of the hour"; never, apparently, had the time been so nearly ripe for any movement which he might choose to inaugurate. The people were expecting a decisive step from him, and the disciples shared, to a certain extent, their expectation.

Partly because the thronging and eagerly expectant crowd left them no leisure so much as to eat (Mark 6 : 31), and partly because they all needed rest and leisure to confer one with

another ; partly, also, because of his own profound sadness in view of the Baptist's death, Jesus called his disciples to go away with him to an unpeopled spot across the head of the Lake. The place was near the city of Bethsaida Julias, and, we may observe, belonged to the dominion, not of Herod, but of Philip, though it seems improbable that this fact influenced Jesus. His motive was not to escape from any possible machinations of Herod, but to secure leisure and quiet.

They went by boat, as was their custom in such cases. The multitude perceived the direction taken by the boat, saw that the unfavorable wind gave them good hope of arriving in time, and hastened by land to that wide, uninhabited plain, not *desert* in our sense of the word (Matt. 14 : 15, compare Mark 6 : 39 ; John 6 : 10) which Jesus had chosen for his retreat. The only feeling of Jesus at this rude intrusion upon his privacy was compassion (Matt. 14 : 14). If at any former time his heart had gone out to them because they were as sheep not having a shepherd, much more so now when the crisis was at hand that would so sternly sift them. And so he welcomed them, and after healing all who had need of healing, he followed up this act of mercy, as was his wont, by teaching them many things. At the close of the day he miraculously fed the great multitude — five thousand men, besides women and children — with five loaves and two fishes, which happened to be all the Apostles' store.

Why Jesus did thus is a somewhat difficult question. We do not know that he ever performed a *needless* miracle, and this from the point of view of the people's necessities was needless. They were within easy reach of Bethsaida and other inhabited places (Luke 9 : 12), and with the abstemious habits that then prevailed, a single day's fast was no great hardship. The case was entirely different at a later date, when the four thousand were fed in the borders of Decapolis (Mark 7 : 31 ; 8 : 2, 4). The explanation appears to be in the circumstances, in the fact that this was a moment of crisis. This great

miscellaneous multitude needed sifting, if only for their own sake; it would have been unmerciful to let so many follow him from wrong motives, and we shall see that the sifting process which began (probably) the next day (John 6 : 66) was dependent on this miracle, which gave him the right to use the testing words of verse 26. It was also a symbolical miracle, suggested, no doubt (vs. 4), by the approach of the Passover.

Its immediate effect, however, was to increase the enthusiasm to the highest pitch. Remembering that, as the rabbis taught, the Messiah was to repeat the miracles of Moses, they were now convinced that Jesus was he, and so little did they understand his nature and the character of his kingdom, that they were ready to take him by force and make him a King. The disciples were so much in sympathy with this ill-advised purpose, that Jesus was obliged to use constraint to send them away (Matt. 14 : 22) before he could calm and disperse the multitude.

We can understand why after this most trying scene he departed into the mountain to pray (Mark 6 : 46), "rehearsing the agony in Gethsemane." He must have seen that this which others deemed an hour of triumph was the beginning of the end. Already he must have felt the weight of the cross and the sharpness of the crown of thorns. After a year and a half of self-giving, of most generous self-revelation, to be misunderstood thus!

In the intensity of prayer it had begun to draw toward morning (Matt. 14 : 25) before he looked seaward (Mark 6 : 48), and perceived that his disciples were struggling with a head wind which made sailing impossible, and against which they could barely hold their own by strenuous labor at the oar. Seeing him coming toward them over the water, the impetuous Peter, not yet perhaps recovered from the strong excitement of the miracle, put him to a test (Matt. 14 : 28) which proved rather to be a test of himself. He did not perish, but he did receive a lesson, one which, with many others, conspired to

make him the firm rock he finally became. And all in the boat gained a new view of Christ's nature, and worshiped him, saying, *Of a truth Thou art the Son of God!*

They landed somewhere along the plain of Gennesaret, and at once the word went out and the sick were brought to be healed. At no time in the life of Jesus do we read of such an exuberance of miracle-working power in him. Never after this did the tide of popular enthusiasm run so high, never after this was his victory over suffering so outwardly manifest. For this was the last time. From this day the character of his work was changed. He might often again perform a single miracle in special cases, he might once more in the half-heathen district beyond the lake heal many sick, but never again did he shed his power broadcast over the Galilean multitude. His work as the Great Physician closed that bright spring morning as he walked the lakeside, returning to Capernaum.

There are some reasons for thinking that the "discourse on eating with unwashed hands" was spoken before that on the Bread of Life. Apparently it was on his approach to Capernaum that those Jerusalem scribes and Pharisees who had been sent down to investigate him (*the Jews* of John 6) met him with a question which appears like asking him to define his policy once for all with regard to the traditional law (Matt. 15:2). Jesus goes to the heart of the question by showing them that their traditional law was founded on a misconception of the nature of holiness. The aim of *the tradition of the elders* was not physical cleanliness, but ceremonial purity. It was a principle of separateness, founded on spiritual pride, which made it impossible for them to see the truth of human brotherhood or to perceive that the service of men was the service of God. No forms or ceremonies could make good the lack of such service, least of all when that lack contravened the explicit commands of God given in the Scriptures, which even the rabbis taught must not be contradicted by traditional law. To assume that a gift to the temple was more acceptable

to God than the dutiful support of parents, for example, was utterly to mistake the divine character as revealed in the Mosaic books.

It was so important that the conscience of the people should be loosed from the bonds of this merely external law, that he directed to the great multitude who followed him, and not merely to his questioners, his utterance of the cardinal principle of moral purity (vs. 11). To appreciate its revolutionary character we must know something of the enormous part the question of ceremonial cleanliness had in Jewish daily life. It is not to be wondered at that the disciples could not understand what seems to us self-evident (Matt. 15:15-20), and that the Pharisees stumbled (vs. 12) at a principle which knocked the foundations from under their teachings.

Reaching Capernaum they were met by many of those whom they had left the evening before on the other side of the lake. Their eager question (John 6:25) gave Jesus the opportunity for that sifting process for which the time had now come. Their craving for the marvelous was no longer to be granted. They were looking for the great Messianic banquet which the rabbis foretold; a different meat was that he gave — a meat that endures to everlasting life. The discourse of Jesus on the Bread of Life is too profound for summary treatment. Another year will afford an opportunity for the detailed study of this passage (John 6:26-65). It is enough here to say that in it the doctrine of faith is fundamentally expounded. Its historic importance lies in the effect it had upon the future attitude of the populace toward Christ.

The latter part of this discourse (from verse 44), probably uttered in the synagogue, gave the deathblow to the political aspirations of the people. Not of "the Jews": they had long ceased to have such expectations of Jesus, and they had no further interest in the matter; it was *his disciples* (not the Twelve) who found it a hard saying and could not receive the prophecy of his death and glorification. In bitter disappoint-

ment they turned away from him in large numbers. The beginning of the end had come.

Jesus fully recognized the trying nature of this test when he asked the Twelve, "Ye would not go away, would ye?" Their bubble, too, had burst (though to re-form itself again more than once, Luke 24:21; Acts 1:6). But they loved him; they had their past experience of him as the basis of an indestructible faith. They believed now and were sure of what they had seen as in a flash on the lake the night before — that he was the Christ, the Son of the living God.

There was one among them who, loving Jesus less because he loved himself more, could not so easily recover from the blow. To him Jesus offered the opportunity to withdraw from their fellowship (John 6:70). If Judas had accepted it, he would have been spared an awful crime. But a lurking hope still bound him to Jesus. He would not yet admit that his self-seeking hopes were blasted. So "faith unfaithful kept him falsely true" for a while longer.

## CHAPTER XX.

### THE WITHDRAWAL INTO NORTHERN GALILEE.

Matt. 15:21—16:28; Mark 7:24—9:1; Luke 9:22-27.

THE purpose of Jesus in going to the neighborhood of Bethsaida Julias was only postponed by the importunity of the multitude in following him thither. Two reasons led him to desire to withdraw for a time into a real seclusion. He desired a period of quiet reflection; and he wanted to complete the education of his disciples. To have remained in Capernaum at this time would have been to precipitate a conflict with Herodians and Pharisees, and effectually put a stop to his work with them, while to have gone up to the Passover with the multitudes now thronging thitherward would have been to precipitate the conflict with the hierarchy, and immediately bring about the catastrophe which actually occurred a year later. He therefore went away to the northwest.

There seems little reason to doubt that he actually crossed the frontier into the Gentile country; but even there he could not find the quiet he desired. A woman, a Gentile and a pagan, learned that this was he with whose fame all that country had been ringing, the long-expected Messiah of the Jews. Her little daughter was possessed of a demon; she had heard of his curing others thus afflicted, and she came and besought him to have mercy on her child, too. That she addressed Jesus as *Son of David* argues nothing for her spiritual enlightenment or her faith; all who knew anything of the Messiah of the Jews knew he was to be of David's line.

It was not to test or strengthen her faith that Jesus at first appeared deaf to her call. It was an important fact that his

personal mission was exclusively to Israel. To have thrown wide open the door of blessing to the Gentiles would have been to alienate the Jewish hierarchy, and worse than this, it would have misled the future Apostles. Israel had been prepared both by the Law and the prophets for the reception of the truth; the heathen had not been so prepared. Not that the Gentiles were to be excluded finally. By three miracles, the healing of the centurion's servant, of the Gerasene demoniac, and of the child of this woman, Jesus taught the first rudiments of the truth of the universality of his kingdom.

We must not exaggerate the rebuff which Jesus gave to this woman; least of all must we see any rudeness in the parable of the *little dogs* and the children. *Let the children first be filled* even implies that the turn of others would come at last; in those days, as in these, the little dogs, the household pets, were only second to the children in the affections of the father of the household; there is not the remotest allusion to the pariah dogs of Revelation 22:15. And that the woman felt no rebuff, but found in the Lord's words an appeal to faith, is evident. Her answer was not clever repartee, but a quick spiritual response to his parabolic teaching. What father, dividing the bread among his children, but lets fall some morsels for the little dogs, their playmates? Here she had a firm foothold for faith, a sure ground of conviction that he would do this thing which she asked of him. And so he did.

Obviously there would be no more retirement for him in this neighborhood, and Jesus went further north, making a wide circuit by way of the boundary of the Sidon district and the passes of Lebanon, and so into the region east of the Upper Jordan. Decapolis at that time extended from Damascus to Philadelphia, a hundred miles north and south. Somewhere in this territory a deaf man was brought to him for healing. The external means which Jesus used were not in the least curative; they were, as has already been shown (Chap. XVII), simple



aids to faith, like the touching of the blind, and, in part, like the permission that the devils might enter into the swine.

The motive of Jesus in charging the restored man and his friends to say nothing of the cure, was that his privacy might be no farther interrupted. His charge was disobeyed. His fame spread throughout Decapolis; once more crowds began to gather about him, until, as he reached the region east of the lake where the first missionary (Mark 5:19) had been sent to proclaim him, there were four thousand men gathered around him, hanging on his words with such intensity of interest that for three days all thought of personal comfort fell into the background. Out of compassion for the multitude Jesus at last performed a second miracle of multiplying food, feeding the great assemblage with seven loaves and a few small fishes.

The accounts of Jesus' movements from this point are somewhat obscure. Neither Dalmanutha (Mark 8:10) nor Magadan (Matt. 15:39) is known to geographers. Somewhere, probably on the western side of the lake, the Pharisees and Sadducees united in asking of him some unmistakable token of his Messiahship. The question showed no desire for more faith, but skepticism, or at best curiosity. The request was granted, though not as they desired. A twofold sign was given — that of the time, which they ought to have been able to read, understanding therefrom that the fullness of the time had come, and that of Jonah, who without miracle preached to a repentant people such as they should have been.

Returning with his disciples to the eastern shore, he tested the depth of their spiritual apprehension. Warning them to beware of mingling political aspirations with their Messianic hopes (the leaven of the Pharisees and of Herod, the mistake of the multitude and of themselves at a former time, John 6:15), he finds their minds still dark; they are thinking, not of the kingdom but of meat and drink.

Arriving at the scene of the first miracle of feeding, Bethsaida Julias (Mark 8:22, comp. Matt. 14:15), Jesus healed

a blind man by a method precisely calculated, as with the deaf man, not to test his faith, but to help it. He was now on his way northward, to a place where in seclusion he could continue the education of his disciples. About eighteen miles north of Bethsaida, high up in the mountains of Lebanon, at the source of the Jordan, was the recently built Cæsarea Philippi. Somewhere near this place Jesus passed a considerable time in quiet, instructing his disciples and communing with God (Luke 9 : 18).

The time had now come to tell them the dreadful truth of his future sufferings ; but before doing so, he prepared and strengthened them by inducing them to put into words their deepest convictions of him. He first asked them as to the popular belief — Who did the people say that the Son of Man was? The people, bewildered by his refusal to take the part which they assumed to be that of Messiah, had begun to think he must be one of the old prophets ; nothing less than a reincarnation of the holiest lives in the nation's history could satisfy their sense of his excellence. But the disciples — Who did they say that he was? Simon, the ever ready, answered for all : *Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God!*

It is impossible not to hear in Jesus' answer the thrill of exultant joy ; his teaching, his example, had not been thrown away ; they were ready now for a new lesson — for a first intimation that the subsequent career of their Master was not to be such as they anticipated. Hints of this had indeed been given (John 2 : 19 ; Matt. 9 : 15, etc.), but with no intention that the words should *then* be understood. Now it was not only safe, but essential that they should understand.

It was too terrible for them to consent to ; yet it was necessary that Peter's horrified disclaimer should be put to them in its true light. Not for Peter to say of what God had willed, *This shall not be unto Thee*. He might not be aware of it, but this was a repetition of Satan's old temptation — urging Jesus to put his personal interest before the interest of the kingdom.

The teachings that follow (Matt. 16 : 24-28) were given in some place near or in the city, to a large audience (Mark 8 : 34 ; Luke 9 : 23). The condition of discipleship is not what the disciple wills but what God wills, even to the extent of self-sacrifice. Three reasons for bearing the cross are given : it is the way to a true life ; nothing in comparison with this true life is of any value, and he who imitates the self-sacrifice of Jesus shall share in his reward.

## CHAPTER XXI.

### THE TRANSFIGURATION, AND THE RETURN TO CAPERNAUM.

Matt., Chs. 17, 18; Mark 9:2-50; Luke 9:28-50.

WE know that in the wilderness of temptation the tempter, vanquished, departed from Jesus, but only *for a season* (Luke 4:13). How often our Lord was called to pass through the ordeal of Satanic temptation we do not know, but apparently Peter's rebuke of his Master for permitting himself to think of suffering a violent death at the hands of the Jewish authorities (Matt. 16:22) was one of these times. Everything shows that Peter's remonstrance took deep hold upon Jesus—the sharp reproof with its dreadful suggestion (vs. 23), the immediately following discourse on the necessity of bearing the cross and losing the life, the forward look to the recompense awaiting, not his disciples only, but himself—all point to the fact that Jesus was shaken to the depths of his soul by Peter's suggestion.

It was therefore for his own sake, no less than for theirs, that that mysterious event, the Transfiguration, occurred. The night of prayer upon the mountain was, we can hardly doubt, a night of agony. His disciples had utterly failed to understand "the law of the cross." Shall we wonder if he himself, who months later than this prayed in agony, "If it be possible let this cup pass," was at this earlier period bewildered by the dark suggestion that the clearly foreseen cross was a token that he was not the expected and promised One? The Transfiguration gave a threefold witness which answered directly to this doubt, if it existed; showing that the way of

the cross was the true way of the Lord's anointed One. First, by his own glorification; the glory which before all worlds he had had with the Father shone out through his mortal frame (Luke 9:29); second, by the appearance of two heavenly visitants, representative of all God's former leading of Israel by law and prophecy, to assure him that his coming death (vs. 31) was, in the upper world if not by his disciples, recognized as the way, not of defeat, but of glorification; third, by the open approval of the Father (vs. 35). Henceforth he could go with unclouded vision to meet what lay before him. From this time he could set his face steadfastly toward Jerusalem (vs. 51), though straight before him on the hill of Golgotha loomed the cross. This is the meaning of the Transfiguration of our Lord.

For the disciples it had another meaning. Peter's utterance (vs. 33) shows how far he or any of them was from understanding the teachings of Jesus about the kingdom. "Master, it is well (convenient) that we are here; we will make three booths." This, he thought, is the blissful method of the Messianic kingdom. Not the way of the cross, not daily self-denial, not losing of the life (vss. 23, 24), but an immediate entrance of earth into communion with heaven, into the glory of the sons of God. But, alas, Peter has but to express this desire that heaven shall begin then and there, with no preparatory discipline of service, sorrow and pain, when the glory vanishes, and the very voice of God warns the disciples to *hear him* who for many months has been teaching them the way of the cross.

The charge of Jesus to tell no man (Matt. 17:9) what they had seen, till after his resurrection, was given for the reason that prompted other similar charges; it could not be understood, and would foster misconception.

At the foot of the mountain they found the other disciples in the midst of an agitated throng — agitated not only because of the exceptionally pitiful case of the epileptic boy brought to

them for healing, but also because they had been unable to do what they had often done before. Their failure to perform this cure was perhaps due to the forebodings awakened in their minds by their Master's recent teaching of the cross and a consequent temptation to forsake him; but the utterance of Jesus, the tone of sharp rebuke and almost impatient discouragement, appears (Matt. 17 : 17) to have been called forth, not by their want of faith, but by that of those around him, especially the father (Mark 9 : 22). Jesus' answer, "If I can! nay, rather, if thou canst," is of the character of all his acts in performing cures — to arouse or foster faith in those who apply for help. It has the desired effect — the flickering spark is fanned to a bright flame (vs. 24), and then the child is healed.

The retirement which Jesus had sought would no longer be possible after this cure, nor was it longer necessary. Jesus had received that of which he had himself been in need — the clear perception of the will of God, an unquestionable assurance of the favor of the Father. He had now only to go forward to meet his will in the confidence of that assurance, and he turned his face toward Jerusalem, by way of Galilee and his old home, Capernaum.

Perhaps it was because, as we may remember (see Chapter XX), Jesus and his disciples had not gone to the Passover that year, that the collectors of the temple tax came to Peter on their return, with the question, "Doth not your Master pay the two drachmas?" — the yearly temple tax, the ransom money (Ex. 30 : 13) for every soul.

In his reply Jesus calls attention to the fact that it is not the children of a king who are taxed for the king's support. But Jesus did not claim for himself alone exemption from this tax, as if he were the *only* Son of God; *the children* are all free, his disciples are all one with him, are sons of God as he is, are free as he is free. And since in the spirit of conciliation and meekness he will not assert this freedom, he will do two things :

he will show his lordship over the world's wealth, and he will expressly associate one of his Apostles with himself in his concession. The fish which is to provide the means will have in his mouth, not a didrachma, but a stater (four drachmas), enough for Peter and Jesus.

On the way from Cæsarea Philippi to Capernaum the disciples, some of them perhaps jealous of the three who had been chosen to accompany Jesus upon the mountain, had been disputing as to who should be greatest in the kingdom, which in spite of all Jesus' teachings they could not but think would soon be visibly established. Being now in Capernaum, Jesus referred to this dispute, giving the law of precedence in his kingdom — that he who did most for others should be the greatest — and the model of the member of the kingdom, the little child. Calling to his side one of those little ones whom we can often perceive in the background of the Gospel pictures, lovingly following the Lord, he taught that such a child represented the spirit of the kingdom, thereby forever giving a peculiar sanctity and significance to childhood. To receive a little child in his name is to receive Jesus; to lead a child astray or fail to help a child to do right is to show a spirit so contrary to that of the Master as to be in itself destructive.

From the responsibility of him who leads another to sin to the duty of him who is sinned against the transition was natural, but Peter did not understand his Master's doctrine of forgiveness. How often, he asked, ought he to forgive an offending brother — seven times? For the rabbis taught that no one need extend forgiveness more than three times. The answer of Jesus, "Until seventy times seven," obviously means that we are not to count up offences but be always in a forgiving mood. The parable by which he illustrated this truth teaches that disciples of Jesus who have been forgiven an infinite debt of sin should be ready, indeed, to forgive every one his brother from the heart.

## CHAPTER XXII.

### AN AUTUMN VISIT TO JERUSALEM.

John, Chapters 7, 8.

AS, owing to the enmity of the Sanhedrin (John 7:1), Jesus had gone up neither to the Passover nor to Pentecost, and as pious Jews considered it almost essential to attend at least one of the three great feasts every year, it was natural that his brethren should urge him to go to the Feast of Tabernacles (vs. 3). Jesus, however, who realized the danger which awaited him in Jerusalem, would not go up with the great caravan to this feast. He recognized the unwisdom of going up in the midst of a festive company, who might easily have been moved to try once more, as at the Passover season (see Chapter XIX), to force him into political prominence. He therefore remained in Capernaum until after the caravan had set forth, and then went up quietly by himself.

Even after his arrival he did not at once make his appearance in the temple, and it is perhaps here that we may place the visit at Bethany recorded in Luke 10:38-42. When at last he did make his appearance, he taught with such convincing authority that the members of the Sanhedrin (John 7:15, comp. 13) marveled at his learning, since they knew that he had belonged to none of the great Rabbinical schools. His teachings deeply impressed many of the inhabitants of Jerusalem, who knew of the machinations of the hierarchy (vs. 25). They felt convinced that this was the Messiah, and suspected that the hierarchy shared this opinion (vs. 26). However, as he was certainly not such a Messiah as they desired, they took refuge in a puerile objection as to his origin (vs. 27, comp. vss. 41, 42). Had they cared to accept him, this matter still troubling



them, they might easily have investigated it; but for a true acceptance of him they knew quite enough both of him and his origin, as Jesus plainly told them (vss. 28, 29). The Pharisees were exasperated by this, even to forming a purpose to arrest him; but his hour — God's time — had not yet come.

In fact it was only fear of the Sanhedrin (vs. 13) that prevented the muttered approbation of the people from becoming an open acknowledgment of him. As it was, the rumor reached the ears of the Pharisees (vs. 32). The Pharisees were the true representatives of the religious, yet unbelieving, nation, but a large majority of the Sanhedrin, including nearly all the priestly party, was composed of Sadducees, who were thorough materialists (Acts 23:8). There was a decided antagonism between these free-thinkers and the strait-laced Pharisees (comp. Matt. 22:34), sticklers for every jot and tittle of the law, but here they were entirely at one; *the chief priests and Pharisees sent officers to seize him*. This was the first of that series of judicial measures which ended in his death.

He knew of the purpose to arrest him. His appeal grew more earnest as he felt that this was the beginning of the end of his work among them, *Yet a little while I am with you*; and it was here that he gave them (John 7:33) "the first gleam of the Christian doctrine of heaven," the first glimpse of the fact that heaven is *to be with God*. This was so far from being the Jewish notion of the place of departed spirits that it is not surprising that they did not apprehend his meaning. They may have very honestly wondered whether, since, as it seemed, the authorities had determined to reject him, it was his purpose to *go unto the Dispersion* (the non-Palestinian Jews), and through them reach even *the Greeks*.

The eighth day, that which commemorated the entrance into Canaan, was *the great day of the Feast* (Num. 29:35), although as dwelling in booths was discontinued on the seventh, many pilgrims returned home on that day, and doubtless many of

Jesus' most enthusiastic Galilean followers had left the city. It was probably in the solemn hush of the sacrifice hour that a voice was heard uprising from the outer court: *If any man thirst, let him come unto Me and drink!* The meaning of the words, the allusion to the miraculous quenching of thirst in the wilderness, could hardly be misunderstood.

They had thought in Galilee (John 6 : 14) that Jesus was the Prophet promised by Moses; now they of Jerusalem were impressed with the same conviction. *The sayings* of Jesus all through the feast days had convinced them of his likeness to the prophetic ideal (Isaiah 11 : 2 ; 61 : 1, etc.), but it was not such a Messiah as this that they desired. They clung with determination to their visions of a kingly Messiah (Isaiah 9 : 6, 7 ; Zech. 9 : 9), and so while some said, *This is the Christ*, others took refuge in a quibble, and asked, *Shall the Christ come out of Galilee?* These remarks are only a summary of the comments made; the Greek gives a vivid impression of the quick interchange of many diverse opinions (comp. John 1 : 21). One thing was evident to them all, that the kingdom Jesus desired was a spiritual one. Even his professed friends were repelled, some more, some less strongly. A few of them were even ready to help the officers in arresting him, so strong was the revulsion of feeling in the disappointment of their carnal hopes. But in general, the impression made by his words was very profound. Even the officers sent by the Sanhedrin to arrest him felt it (John 7 : 46) — only the rulers remained unmoved. One of the number, Nicodemus, did raise his voice in protest against the summary action they desired to take, but his words produced no effect.

The first eleven verses of chapter 8, though valuable, and bearing the unmistakable stamp of truth, certainly do not belong in this place. The chapter properly begins with the word of Jesus, *I am* (vs. 12), and closes with his word, *I AM* (vs. 58). Between these two words his true character and nature are wondrously set forth. It was probably on one

of the days immediately following the feast, when only the people of Jerusalem were left, the hostile Pharisees, the bewildered citizens, half ready to believe yet dazzled by the very purity of the light which he poured upon them, that the first part of this discourse was spoken (vss. 12-19). Such teachings were gall and wormwood to the rulers, who saw in them the ruin of their worldly hopes. They dared not lay hands on him, for there were too many of the *common people* (7:49) who were inclined to believe in him, to make such an attempt safe in the much frequented place (8:20) where he was teaching. But he knew their hearts, and from his own heart of infinite pity came the words of most sorrowful prophecy, which fell, as it were, drop by drop, "His tear-words over lost Israel": *I go my way. But ye shall seek me. And shall die in your sins. Whither I go ye cannot come.*

In the dense darkness of their self-blinding the Sanhedrin never suspected that he knew of their murderous plans (vs. 22). And after some little time (vss. 23-29), perhaps not till the next day, he spoke again, once more making clear the essential difference between himself and them, not a difference of nature, nor of substance, but of character. For a moment they caught a glimpse of the wondrous meaning of his words, and compelled by his very truth, *as he spoke these words many believed on him* (vs. 30).

To those believers (vs. 31) Jesus began a new discourse which was for testing, and which showed that they had not the courage to follow his teachings. Their answering boast of freedom was not a falsehood (vs. 33), as many think. They were not speaking of earthly bondage any more than Jesus was speaking of political freedom. It was of spiritual privileges they were speaking when they asked how they, Abraham's seed, could be given a larger freedom than they enjoyed, and in answer Jesus showed them a larger spiritual truth than they had ever dreamed of: *whosoever committeth sin is a slave* (the words of *sin* seem to be a gloss, and obscure the meaning). Instead of being

the spiritual children of God, they *were of a father who is the devil*, they refused to enter God's fellowship, and the evil desires of the devil they *willed to do*.

This furnished that test for all character, his own as well as theirs — the willingness of men to receive new light from above (7: 17). There is something very solemn in the silence which followed the question, *Which of you convicted me of sin?* And then again the pause that fell after, *And if I say truth, why do ye not believe me?*

They could not answer. Those who had half believed were speechless — not so the members of the Sanhedrin (vs. 48), who broke in with a charge of heresy and want of patriotism (the word *Samaritan* includes both).

Jesus would not admit their right to judge, but referred the question to God. The next teaching (vs. 56) was not of the preëxistence of Christ, but of the present interest of Abraham in the earthly life of Christ — a most important teaching. But on their persistent refusal to understand this (which harmonized with Jewish notions of the condition of souls in the intermediate state), he did plainly teach them his preëxistence and divinity. Now they are quite ready to understand him, for it gives them an excuse for stoning him on the charge of blasphemy. But Jesus withdrew into the crowd, who were surely not ready to join in this onslaught, and quietly passed out of the temple.

## CHAPTER XXIII.

### CHRIST'S FINAL DEPARTURE FROM GALILEE, AND THE MISSION OF THE SEVENTY.

Matt. 19:1, 2; 8:18-22; 11:20-30; Mark 10:1; Luke 9:51-10:42.

THE Galilean ministry was at an end, and Jesus set his face toward Jerusalem. He was accompanied, not only by the Twelve, but by a large caravan of men and women (Matt. 19:2, comp. 20:17, 29); not a festal company, but a body of believers, who later made the church of Galilee (1 Cor. 15:6; Acts 9:31). They were still dominated by worldly hopes, and looked now for the immediate establishment of the Messianic kingdom.

The shortest and most natural route was by Samaria, and the presence of this large body made it needful that messengers should be sent before to make ready for their entertainment. But the Samaritans, always jealous of the Jews, though they had two years before been glad to accept Jesus as the Messiah (John 4:42), could not tolerate the thought of the kingdom being established in Jerusalem, and they refused to receive him. It was not a mere ebullition of temper—it was pure zeal, or rather, zealotry, misguided zeal, which led the Sons of Thunder to desire the condign punishment of the inhospitable Samaritans. They honestly believed that such an act would be in accordance with the will of Jesus, not knowing as yet what manner of spirit they were of.

Rejected at the border of Samaria, Jesus turned away by the highroad that leads down the beautiful valley of the Jezreel, to the fords of the Jordan, at Pella, on the boundary of Perea. This province was under the dominion of Herod, though

separated from Galilee by the cities of the Decapolis lying spread out fanwise along the three great highways leading from Jordan to the northeast and southeast. It was peopled by Jews of mixed blood, simple and unsophisticated. Though subject to the raids of Arabian tribes (perhaps for that reason) the Roman and Herodian yoke was less heavy upon them than upon Western Palestine, and their national or religious zeal was correspondingly less intense. For these reasons, and also because of the preaching of the Baptist, this district offered a favorable field for Jesus to continue his work, especially the training of the Twelve.

Perhaps before entering Perea, while on its boundary, Jesus enlarged his evangelistic work by choosing from among the multitude of believers seventy whom he sent before himself to prepare the various Perean villages for his coming. The time was short; as in Galilee, so here, he would not have any one fail of hearing the Gospel of repentance and salvation. The instructions which he gave them were largely the same as those given to the Twelve on a similar occasion (see Chapter XIX), counsels of courtesy and prudence. It was natural that in sending forth these evangelists to an untried field, the mind of Jesus should revert to those cities in which so many of his mighty works had been done, Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida, with sorrowful and solemn anticipation of the woes that must follow their rejection of his salvation (Luke 10:13-16).

How long the mission of the Seventy lasted we do not know; so small and much subdivided a field need not have occupied them long. They returned to a certain undesignated rendezvous, bringing tidings of success which filled our Lord with a holy exultation. Here, for the last time in his history, flashed out that high, yet artless joy which so characterized his early ministry. He gave thanks to God, who, though he had hidden the mysteries of his kingdom from the wise and prudent, the proud-hearted rabbis, had revealed them unto "babes," the humble and unpretending ones, who, opening

their hearts to love of him, had their eyes opened to the truth of God.

Several months (from November to February, perhaps) Jesus passed in this well-prepared district, instructing his disciples, especially in the newly-opened truth of the suffering Messiah, and giving to them and to the multitudes who followed him (already for the most part believers) a course of instruction in the characteristics of discipleship, in self-sacrifice, and in ethical principles, his many parables being chiefly of grace and warning, rather than, as in earlier times, explanatory of the kingdom of God.

The sifting process which he had some time before begun was now more rigorously carried on. Three incidents of this are given, not as occurring simultaneously but as illustrative of the general truth which was henceforth to receive special emphasis, that the calling and ministry of God demand the entire man. The truth perhaps applies more rigorously to Christians of to-day than we are wont to admit.

One of the most important of the parables of this period not only illustrated this truth, but poured a flood of light upon it. It was called forth by a lawyer — not one of the Sanhedrin nor even a Jerusalem scribe, but a Pereaan rabbi, who desired not to *tempt* in our sense, but after the common rabbinical habit, to *test* by subtle disputation the abilities of a rival teacher. He asked what was required of one who would have eternal life. He had no sense of sin — the question was to him a purely theoretical one, but his answer to the question by which (in true rabbinical fashion) Jesus responded to his question showed that he had not only studied the Mosaic law with care but had deeply penetrated its spirit. His answer was entirely right. There was no irony in Jesus' rejoinder, "This do and thou shalt live," for if eternal life were to be won by good works, it would be won by works done in the spirit of energizing love which he had here described. Perhaps the lawyer thought that Jesus did not himself appreciate the difficulty of regulating life

by such exalted motives; he asked (still testing, not carping) the great question of the religious life on its practical side — Who is my neighbor? The answer was given in the marvellous parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 25–37) — the traveller despoiled, wounded by highwaymen, passed by in heartless indifference by men whose profession was religion, and succored by a despised Samaritan. The lawyer's inquiry was transposed in the question with which Jesus closed the lovely story — “Which of these three, thinkest thou, proved neighbor to him that fell among the robbers?” and the quick response, “He that showed mercy on him,” showed that the questioner had gained new light. He saw that love, the spirit of service, was the basis of men's relations one to another, and that the real question is not “Who is my neighbor?” but “Whose neighbor am I?” Love is ever reaching out for opportunities to do service and transforms all duty into privilege.

The story may have been told at that mid-period of the Perea ministry when Jesus was on his way to Jerusalem to attend the winter Feast of the Dedication (see next Chapter, John, chs. 9, 10). The company may have been journeying along the very scene of the story, that robber-infested hill-road that leads up with the steep ascent of three thousand feet in twenty miles from Jericho to Jerusalem. Arrived at Jerusalem, nothing is more probable than that Jesus made his abode with the beloved family at Bethany. Though, as has already been said, it appears more probable that the incident which Luke relates immediately after the parable of the good Samaritan actually occurred on one of Jesus' earlier visits, before he became the close, confidential friend of Martha and Mary which it is evident from John 11 that he was a few weeks after the present time, it is very certain that now, when the enmity of the hierarchy was open and pronounced, common prudence required that he should not lodge in Jerusalem itself, and that he should be surrounded with trusty and influential friends, such as the Bethany family appear to have been. It matters not when



Jesus uttered to Martha those words which have been the reproof and admonition, and encouragement too, of his disciples from that day to this (Luke 10 : 41, 42). In the present day, in which Christians have more than ever before learned the delight and rich reward of "much serving" of our Lord, it is more than ever necessary to remember that beyond all we can do for him, or give to him, in gorgeous churches and frequent services and abundant charities, he loves to have us appreciate *himself* and prize every opportunity of communion with him, sitting silent at his feet and hearing his word.

## CHAPTER XXIV.

### A WINTER VISIT TO JERUSALEM.

John, Chapters 9, 10.

JESUS went back to Jerusalem in full knowledge of the decree which had been made in consequence of the critical events of his latest visit (John, chapters 7, 8), excommunicating any open follower of him (9 : 22). It was no doubt directly because of this decree that, though his miracle-working period was past, he performed the striking miracle of our lesson, healing a man born blind. His performing it upon a Sabbath day was an incidental witness to the fact that the enmity of the hierarchy was not to deter him from bearing witness to all forms of truth — as his coming to Jerusalem while thus under the ban was a proof of his fearlessness of consequences in the work he had to do (comp. 10 : 11), and his conduct when the Jews attempted to stone him (vss. 31, 32, comp. 8 : 59) still further showed the hierarchy that they need not expect to silence him by any such means, or, indeed, by any means until his work was done. All three events were so many tokens of his yearning love over Israel (Hosea 11 : 8). How often would he have gathered them and they would not !

The disciples, confusedly connecting their Lord's teaching about spiritual inheritance (John 8 : 33-47) with the old Jewish problem of the cause of affliction — the problem of Job's friends — ask Jesus through whose sin this calamity had befallen this man. The answer of Jesus turns their mind away from the *cause* of calamity to the purpose — that blessing may ensue. He then makes the practical application, What does God call us to *do* in view of calamity? and answers it (9 : 4-7) by the cure of the blind man.

The excitement caused by the event is vividly presented by the brief questions and answers of the next paragraph (vss. 8-12). The efforts made by the Pharisees to discredit Jesus in the public mind and to terrify the man into disowning his cure simply resulted in completing the spiritual healing of a man whom we must hold to have been hitherto peculiarly stolid and without interest in Jesus, since though a public beggar on the temple steps, hearing all public gossip, he had never in all the visits of Jesus to Jerusalem made a request for healing. The opposition of the Jews made him more and more clearly see the true character and power of Jesus, and he became brave to bear even excommunication for his sake (vs. 34); when Jesus sought him and completed his spiritual illumination.

Perhaps seeing these two together some day, the Pharisees, wondering, not without contempt, at such a companionship, were taught (vss. 39-41) that in their own judgment of this man they had made clear that the inevitable result of Christ's mission was also a judgment. Those who, feeling their blindness are glad to accept the light, are made to see; while they who proudly claim that they have light enough (comp. vs. 29) are only blinded by the true Light (comp. Matt. 11:25). Their question, Surely we are not blind? (John 9:40) is its own answer; it reveals the very condition he has just described. They have chosen to class themselves with those who say We see; the subject, therefore, is no longer blindness, but sin. Their sin abideth (vs. 41), for it is morally impossible to free those from darkness who determine to receive no more light.

There is no break between this teaching and the next chapter (John 10). Jesus at once illustrates what he has said by two parables or allegories, which precisely recapitulate in parabolic form the events which had just transpired, as the question in verse 21 makes clear. In these parables, as in the miracle of healing with all its attendant circumstances, Jesus now gives a new revelation of himself. These inimical Jews shall not fail of one more effort for their salvation. Though they have

closed their minds to the Truth (8 : 31-47) and shut their eyes to the Light (9 : 5, 39-41), still to their hearts he will make the last appeal of Love. And so with the boldness of love he sets before them, in a series of metaphors, the self-seeking cruelty of their conduct, and the divine unselfishness of his own, giving them the first unmistakable word of that self-revelation of love of which the last was, *Father forgive them, for they know not what they do.*

There is no such confusion of metaphors in this passage (10 : 1-10) as devout persons often try to explain away. The parables are a pair, after Jesus' usual custom, entirely distinct, throwing light on two different sides of the same truth. The scene of the first is the rock-walled sheep-fold, such as perhaps at that moment their eyes were resting upon over against the city on the Mount of Olives, with its open door toward which various flocks were streaming — the door which, open gave them entrance, closed, protection. This Jesus was; the one Mediator of salvation. The shepherd and the robber and the porter are simply incidentals of the story; we have already learned (see Chapter XVI) not to seek for more than one teaching in a single parable; the central thought of this parable is in verse 7. Then by a natural transition a new parable begins. From the love which, existing all for the beloved, in no wise for itself, finds in the Door its beautiful representation, we naturally rise to the highest expression of love — perfect self-sacrifice, the laying down of life. This is so exquisitely represented by the Good Shepherd (vss. 11-18) that it has passed into all art and literature as the perfect epitome and expression of the Gospel of Christ.

Here again we must keep to the unity, the simplicity, of the parable. The lesson is not of the character of the atonement, the nature of vicarious sacrifice; it is solely of the nature of love. The sacrifice of the Good Shepherd is indeed not vicarious — when he lays down his life for the sheep, the sheep are at the mercy of the wolf. The sheep have not merited death;

the shepherd dies, not voluntarily in expiation, but, *if necessary*, for love. How impressive, how awe-inspiring is the lesson of the fact that it was in presence of his openly avowed enemies, of men who bitterly hated him, foreseeing as he must have done the ultimate outcome, that he uttered this declaration of undying love. How deep was the emotion with which he pronounced these marvellous words we see from the poetic form into which, in times of strong feeling, his words were wont to fall, repeating themselves like a refrain. Four times he speaks of the supreme proof of love (vss. 11, 15, 17, 18), each time with a higher meaning, a more triumphant significance. His hearers were evidently deeply moved — some to scorn (vs. 20) and some to a timid faith (vs. 21).

Perhaps a day or two after these events Jesus was walking in one of the porticoes of the temple, when for the last time some of the hierarchy came and vehemently urged him to declare himself openly as the Messiah — perhaps even yet ready to own him if he would place himself at the head of a national movement. But here and always he would base his Messianic claim only on his filial relation to God. His argument from the passage in Psalm 82 of his right to call himself the Son of God is not a Rabbinical refinement, but a deep spiritual teaching. Every one who has in any degree received the word of God and authority from him, does so far partake of the divine nature. How much more he who is in fullest measure the utterance of the divine mind and will! The works which he had done were proof enough that he was the Word of God.

They would not accept him in this character, and decided to arrest him. But his time had not yet come. He returned to Perea, to the sacred scene of his own call and anointing, and there taught a prepared people who saw in him the realization of all that John had led them to look for.

## CHAPTER XXV.

DISCOURSES ON PRAYER AND AGAINST THE PHARISEES.

Luke 11:1-13, 37-54; Ch. 12.

JESUS and his disciples had returned to Perea from the Feast of the Dedication at Jerusalem (last Chapter), and were in Perea Bethany where Christ had been publicly announced by John as the Lamb of God which taketh away the sin of the world, and where four, at least, of his disciples had first seen and learned to love their Master. Great multitudes had accepted him, prepared in part by the mission of the Seventy (see Chapter XXIII), and in part by the revival of three years before under the preaching of the Baptist.

It was some of the recent disciples who made the important request, *Lord, teach us to pray*. They had, perhaps, seen the Apostles praying; they remembered that the Baptist had taught his disciples to pray, and recognized that these prayers were something quite other than those they had from childhood formally offered. In answer Jesus taught them a shortened form of the prayer which long before he had taught his disciples in Galilee.

To those who heard him many of the expressions in the prayer which Jesus was teaching were familiar. Many of the Rabbinical prayers addressed God as *Father*, and *Thy kingdom come* was a frequent petition on the lips of zealous Jews. The ascription with which we always close our repetition of the Lord's Prayer does not appear in our Revised Version, for it is not in the best text; it was the common Temple formula of response to prayer, and it is by no means impossible that those whom Jesus was teaching responded with these words at the close of this prayer. One thing, however, is very important: the fact

that in all the prayers of the Rabbis are to be found no petitions in the least corresponding to two of these, *Forgive us our sins*, and *Lead us not into temptation*. And no other prayer ever uttered so perfectly sums up the heart's best aspirations and needs as does this prayer which our Lord, in at least two instances, gave to his disciples as a model.

The prayer was followed by a parable (Luke 11 : 5-8) teaching — not by any means that God reluctantly answers prayer, but that he delights in earnestness, and therefore in the importunity which bears witness to it. No parable has been more often made to militate against the spirit of true prayer, which is always submission to God's will. Its moral is clearly drawn in verses 9, 10, *Keep on asking, keep on seeking, keep on knocking* (as the Greek tenses mean).

The passage that follows in this chapter evidently has its chronological setting elsewhere. We find it in Chapter XVI (A Day of Teaching by the Sea of Galilee). What follows from verse 37 onward was spoken at the table of a Pharisee, who had invited Jesus to a *morning meal* (not dinner, as in the text), and it turns upon the fact that Jesus sat down to table without washing his hands. When we consider the immense importance the Jews gave to the ceremony of hand-washing before meals, and realize for ourselves the good reasons for such a practice at a period when knives and forks as table implements were unknown, and every one ate with the fingers, frequently from a common dish, we feel sure that Jesus, who was most courteous as well as most kind, must have had strong reasons for neglecting a custom so easy to practice. What his reason was we have already learned (see Chapter XIX). The custom was not simply one of refinement, it was a religious ceremony and based upon a complete misconception of the nature of holiness, which depends, not on external cleanliness, but on internal purity. But there was more even than this. The principle of separateness which this form typified was diametrically opposed to the principle of brotherhood, which is

the cardinal Christian doctrine of human relations. Therefore it was that Jesus so sternly set his face against this traditional custom about washing (Matt. 15 : 2 ; Mark 7 : 3, comp. Heb. 9 : 10). How important it was that the mind of his followers should be clear on these questions is shown by the fact that our Lord uttered similar denunciations against the Pharisees on more than one occasion (Matt. 23 : 13-36).

There were scribes at table — lawyers, learned men, who often held in great contempt the ignorant bigotry of the Pharisees. They had probably listened with secret pleasure to these denunciations, and now identified themselves with the Pharisees (Luke 11 : 45) with the intention of bringing out a compliment to their superior intelligence. But superior intelligence only makes error the more blameworthy.

The strong denunciations of Jesus appear to have led to something like an uproar (vss. 53, 54, 12 : 1), almost, we might think, an attempt at violence. People came running together to the number of many thousands, trampling one another down in their excitement. His opponents seized the opportunity to set themselves vehemently against him, those nearest plying him with questions with the purpose of eliciting something that would rouse popular feeling to a climax. How imminent was the danger we learn from Christ's words (12 : 4) to his disciples, who had evidently rallied around him.

It is very striking that he should take this time for uttering a warning against that leaven of the Pharisees, hypocrisy, for it was by no means a genuine religious zeal that inspired the mob. His bravery impressed, checked, calmed them. His fearless reminder of what he had long ago taught his disciples of the Father's ever watchful care (vss. 6, 7) and his calm appeal to their courage in this hour of danger (vss. 8, 12) must have strongly affected them. We must picture to ourselves the seething, shouting crowd to realize the power with which those words fell upon the listening ears.

Perhaps almost immediately the excitement so calmed down



that some one could appeal to him for his influence in a matter of inheritance. In his answer our Lord defined his own mission; not to remedy individual cases of wrong, but to bring into the world a spirit under whose influence men shall not desire to wrong their fellows; not to encourage the wronged man to rise against his oppressor, but to take a firm stand both against the spirit of oppression and the spirit of greed. The root principle of all social and political wrong is covetousness, a mistaken selfish idea of what is good and desirable.

The parable that follows (vss. 16-21) was the natural illustration of the text (vs. 15), and the occasion was eminently one for a repetition (vss. 22-30) of his Galilean teachings (Matt. 6: 25ff.) as to the futility and want of faith involved in anxious care for temporal welfare. The conclusion, *But rather seek ye the kingdom of God* (Luke 12: 31), naturally led on to three parables (35-37, 38-40, 42-48) of warning as to the second coming of Christ and the sorrows by which it must be preceded (49-53). The rebuke with which this discourse ended (54-56) was never more appropriate than it is to-day. The signs of the time were evident then, but not one whit more evident than now. The Jews of Jesus' day, if they had but known it, were living in a grand and glorious time—the kingdom of God had come near to them; they had but to accept their Messiah, for all the blessings of the Messianic reign to begin; but they closed their eyes to the day of their visitation, and the most awful destruction known to history shortly fell upon them. So we. The opportunities of this time are glorious; the reign of true brotherhood, of a genuine Christianity, is as near as the stretching out of our hands. But covetousness, that death-principle against which our Lord warned his disciples, is in the air; its hideous influence upon our commercial and economic system is everywhere evident; its blight upon society is plain to those who have eyes to see. Shall we let it steal over the Church also? Or shall we discern the signs of the times, see and seize hold of our glorious

opportunity to purify our social order by rising above its miasmatic air into a pure region of unselfishness and the seeking, not of our own, but our brother's weal; that upper air of divine unselfishness, devoted service, which our Lord breathed while he was on earth?

## CHAPTER XXVI.

### THE SABBATH QUESTION AGAIN, AND THE PARABLE OF THE GREAT SUPPER.

Luke, Chapters 13, 14.

THE opening verses of this lesson appear to follow immediately upon the closing words of the one that preceded it (Luke 12:58, 59). The thought of retribution appears to have been in the hearers' minds, and to some recurred a recent event, of which indeed history records nothing, though it accords too well with Pilate's known acts to be at all doubtful. The unspoken question of the Perea narrators was that of the disciples with reference to the man born blind (John 9:2). Had those Galileans upon whom fell the tower been guilty of atrocious sin? Jesus disclaimed all thought of special retribution: *all* men need to repent, or all shall perish. He illustrated by a catastrophe that had occurred to Judeans, (generally held to be of superior goodness,) and carried the teaching farther by a parable which showed that the need of repentance was urgent, that the time of God's long suffering of the Jewish nation was almost past.

The Sabbath question came up in Perea by a miracle performed by Jesus in a synagogue — the healing of a woman afflicted, perhaps, with that paralysis of the will — hysteria — which manifests itself in so many ways, and which had kept her bowed over for eighteen years. To the rural synagogue ruler, as to a large class who fancy themselves peculiarly holy, there was no sin like the violation of ecclesiastical order. With perverse unreason he rebuked — not Jesus, he had not the courage for that; not the woman, and indeed she had not come to be healed, but to worship God; but the people, who

had simply looked on with admiration, telling them to take the six week days, not the Sabbath, for being healed — not perceiving how much he conceded by such a command. This senseless opposition of the ruler roused in our Lord that indignation to which one sin, and one only seemed ever to move him. The very concession to Jesus' power showed the ruler's zeal for ecclesiastical order to be only a pretence. "*Hypocrite!*" our Lord exclaimed. Even the strict rabbinical laws permitted the loosing of an animal for the quenching of its thirst; should not this daughter of Abraham — evidently such in heart, not merely in blood — be loosed from the Satanic bond that for eighteen years had lain upon her will?

In the favorable reaction that followed his triumphant refutation of the ruler, Christ told two parables (given also, probably, to the Galileans, Matt. 13:31-33) having an especially important teaching at this late period, when, notwithstanding the crowds of followers, the greater part of Christ's time and teaching was given to his immediate disciples — the Twelve. Men were not to assume that because his teachings were so restricted, the kingdom of God was to be confined to a chosen few. It must embrace the whole people (Luke 13:19), it must penetrate the national life (vs. 21). Yet salvation was not to be a wholesale work. To each individual the question was one of individual conduct — effort. "Agonize, contend as do the athletes in the arena, to enter in at the narrow gate," for the accepted time for the Jewish nation was a limited time.

We must bear in mind that however properly we may apply the words of our Lord to other cases, his words were spoken to Jews, and their immediate bearing was *always* on the attitude of the Jewish people to the Messianic salvation. So our Lord went on with a parable (which was, as it were, a "study" for the great parable of the Ten Virgins) teaching that to be of the Chosen People, to have had his presence and teaching as a part of their common life, was not enough. The workers of iniquity would have no part in the kingdom — the Chosen

People should see themselves displaced by those all the world over who would choose to accept and obey him.

The Pharisees who about this time came to Jesus with the ostensibly well-disposed warning that Herod was planning to kill him, may have been emissaries of Herod, who, too cowardly to proceed against Jesus, thought to silence him by intimidation, or to crowd him out of his own jurisdiction into that of Pilate; or they may have been of the hierarchical party, who desired to have him again in Judea, where alone their criminal jurisdiction held. Whatever the motive of the warning, Jesus showed that he perceived it. He would not "depart" at the bidding of Herod, yet depart he would, for it was the will of God. (The word is the same in verses 31 and 33.) Leisurely, in perfect command of his own motives he would move on, doing cures for the brief time before his own perfecting by death. Yes, he must depart to-day and to-morrow and the day following, for only in Jerusalem could he die. And at that thought all the yearning of his heart over this perverse but beloved nation found utterance in words of deepest pathos.

Somewhere on this last journey he was invited by a Pharisee to partake of the hospitable Sabbath feast to which those who lived near the synagogue invited those from a distance. According to custom, there was a watching crowd gathered around the open doors, and among them a man with the dropsy. For the last time Jesus attempted to free his people from the intolerable yoke of ordinances by performing a cure on the Sabbath. This time no accusation was brought against him, the lawyers and the Pharisees were dumb. But for the sake perhaps of the waiting crowd, whose minds might afterward be obscured by Pharisaic teaching, he said a few words setting the action in its true light with regard to rabbinical restrictions, and the Pharisees present had no refutation to offer.

The three parables that follow are in sequence of thought and applicable to the immediate circumstances. At this Sab-

bath feast between the two religious services of the day, to which probably a rather heterogeneous company had been invited, there had been some rivalry for the "chief seats" on the central couch along the upper end of the table; in a few words Jesus showed the nobility of a true humility that seeks not great things for itself, but is content with such recognition as God will give to real desert.

The next parable related to that hospitable practice by which the present company had been assembled. True hospitality, he said, did not consist in inviting only one's rich friends, who could return the compliment, but in selecting rather the poor, who could do nothing in return. One of the guests upon this remarked in a general way, perhaps thinking that Jesus would be pleased with the sentiment, that those would be blessed who should eat bread in the kingdom of God. Jesus replied with a parable which showed that as a matter of fact there are many who, though they have much to say of their longing for the intimate communion with God and with heavenly things which their presence at such a feast would imply, yet do not in their hearts care for that blessed privilege. The closing words, in which Jesus identified himself with the master of the banquet, brought the practical application close home to the hearers, showing them the utter worthlessness of self-deceiving piety. But the parable teaches more than this: it shows that the kingdom of God is a kingdom of grace, prepared, not for those who abound, but for those who need — the sinful, the suffering, the poor, the destitute. And the thrice repeated invitation, the urgent sending to class after class until those actually needy were reached, shows the yearning of God that men shall come and partake of the blessings he has provided. He longs to have his house filled.

Naturally these teachings gratified and attracted the despised crowds around the doors. They followed him in greater numbers than ever, believing, no doubt, that they were to have special privileges in the new kingdom. Perceiving their failure

to realize that the partakers of that kingdom must accept duties as well as privileges, he bade them count the cost before they pledged themselves to his service, for if they were not willing to bear their cross and endure hardships for the sake of the kingdom, they could not be his disciples.

## CHAPTER XXVII.

### THREE PARABLES OF GRACE AND TWO OF WARNING.

Luke, Chs. 15, 16; 17:1-10.

THE first three parables of our lesson are addressed in part to the despised multitude, who were disposed to receive the Lord Jesus and enter his service. He had taught them (Luke 14:16-24) that God's kingdom was one of grace prepared for those who need, and they had joyfully heard this teaching, drawing near to him in increasing numbers. How well they understood that he did not purpose to repel them by his further teaching that the kingdom was one of duties as well as privileges, that there was a cross to be borne for its sake (vss. 25-33), is shown by the fact that publicans and sinners still *kept on drawing near him* (15:1). This aroused the indignation of the Pharisees and scribes (vs. 2), and these parables were therefore spoken also and primarily to them.

It was not a proof of peculiar perversity that these outwardly righteous people murmured at Christ receiving and eating with publicans and sinners. Those of us who take such a view simply show how small is our knowledge of human nature and of the inveterate persistence of habitual views. The publican — the toll collector — was hated by all his fellow-citizens, not only because he, being a Jew, was willing to hold an office which witnessed to the subjection of God's chosen people to an alien heathen power, but also because almost by the conditions of his office he was a dishonest oppressor. Publicans were everywhere placed in the same category as robbers. It was against the law to permit them to offer sacrifices or give alms in the temple. It was exceedingly difficult for well-disposed people to tolerate their presence or to believe in the genuineness of their professions of good intentions, just as



it is hard for Christians to-day, to believe in the professed repentance of men guilty of scandalous sin. And with their notions of ceremonial purity it was hard for scribes and Pharisees to see how a good man could eat with such people.

Jesus had been all over this ground in Galilee. He now took up the question in Perea. His treatment of it is markedly different here from there. There is absolutely nothing of controversy in his teachings here, because controversy had not been forced upon him as it had been in Galilee. These provincial scribes and Pharisees were less learned, less acute, less bigoted, perhaps, than those. Living somewhat apart from the intense patriotism and ecclesiasticism of the Judeans, being less alert and wide awake than the Galileans, they needed a different treatment from either, and we see that in teaching them Jesus is especially mild and conciliatory. The method of Jesus with Pereaans of both classes, those reckoned as good and those classed as bad, was to teach great Gospel truths on broad, simple, and very practical lines, leaving aside nearly all the symbolical teachings of the Galilean parables, such as those of Matt. 13 (see Chapter XVI). Truth is brought straight home to the hearts of all classes. He invites his hearers to consider God's relation to sinners as viewed from the heavenly side, and then, of their own conviction, to justify his own relations with men.

He begins, therefore, with the personal appeal to these scribes and Pharisees — *What man of you* but would do just what I am doing if you were in my place, pitying the lost, seeking them out at the cost of toil and danger, forgetting for the moment those more satisfactory persons who have not gone wrong, and rejoicing with exquisite joy — a joy that demands the sympathy of others — when at last the lost is found? He had told the same story to the Galileans in connection with God's love for children, but there it bore a note of warning — the awful responsibility of any action which would lead another into sin. Here there is no warning, hardly the slightest under-

lying reproof, but a full-hearted appeal to his hearers to think for a moment how marvellous a thing it was that they had a God who could rejoice over the finding of one who was lost! The closing words of the parable must have strikingly brought to their minds by contrast the Rabbinical proverb, "There is joy before God when those who provoke him perish from the world." They knew better than this about God. Prophet and psalmist had long ago taught them that Jehovah loved his people even as a father loves his children; but this knowledge had been overlaid and obscured by the legal notion of the relations between man and God taught through generations of rabbinism. It needed no argument to show the mistake of such teachings — it needed only to appeal to the instincts in their own breasts.

The purpose of the second parable was precisely the same — to bring another class of hearers into the same attitude of sympathy with God. What woman — and of course there were women present — but would understand this intense yearning of God for the lost, even from the petty experiences of her daily life? No need to appeal to the maternal instinct — as it seems to us so natural that he should have done; it needed not a universal, all-compelling passion to teach these women the value of the lost to God; the slipping away of a coin, a mere didrachma worth fifteen cents, was enough to make them catch the awful meaning of the word LOST, to one like God.

His hearers of all classes being thus brought into sympathy, he could give to them that most precious of parables, the story of the Lost Son. There is no need to rehearse it here; what child can remember when he heard it first? We need only to ask what Jesus meant by it to teach the Pharisees and scribes and publicans and sinners, women and men, now hanging on his words.

First of all, let us remember that this is a *parable* and not an *allegory*. The sphere from which it is drawn so easily lends itself to allegorical interpretation that it is not surprising that

it is usually so interpreted, but to interpret it thus is to lose the broad, simple, clear, luminous teaching of Jesus as to the relation of God to men—the purpose of the parable, the full and sufficient justification of himself for all his human relations. The old tendency to allegorizing interpretation of Scripture which was the darkness of the later Jewish and the early Christian Church is by no means eradicated from Christian teaching to-day. We smile at the ancient teaching that the four rivers of Paradise are the four cardinal virtues, and repudiate the “fourfold interpretation” of the Roman Church, but we continually obscure the beautiful teachings of our Lord by insisting on a minute application of details which were only meant to put the central truth in a true horizon. Jesus in his teachings always keeps to the main issue. He never intended that we should lose sight of the immensely important central truth of any parable—above all, of this one—by turning it into an allegory and fitting every detail of it to some phase of human experience.

The lesson of this pearl of parables, the Lost Son, is one; it is fundamentally important; it is at the very foundation of the Gospel; it has nothing to do with the character of the sinner, or with the heinousness of his sin, or with the method of his return to God. The long, beautiful story is indeed strikingly true to human experience; it was marvellously adapted in every incident to bring every hearer into that condition of sympathy by which he could apprehend the one great, glorious truth, and Jesus told these incidents for that purpose; but his heart must have been wrung with a deep pang if his hearers began, as we generally do, to apply these details to themselves or their acquaintances, instead of gaining from them the heavenly atmosphere in which alone they could see the truth of God: that he, being a Father, could by no possibility act otherwise than he does toward the repentant sinner; that it is in the nature of a Father to rejoice over the recovery of the lost child, that it is the natural condition of father and son to

be in a relation of grace, not of debt. Not labor and payment, service and reward, but deathless love through all outrage and neglect, glad forgiveness of the repentant, and rejoicing that must have fellowship over the recovery of the lost. "*It was meet* that we should make merry and be glad"—it was in the nature of things; and father's heart responds to Father's heart, and man comes into some apprehension of divine love, through such a parable as this.

There is no back-handed thrust at the Pharisee in the character of the elder brother—we have not the slightest warrant for assuming that his service all these years had been perfunctory and heartless. The commonplace truth that every one prefers warm affection to cold obedience has no more place here than the question whether any son of God is perfect (vs. 29). The truth is one; not the obedience of man, but the character of God is our warrant for trusting his love.

The parable of warning (16:1-12), shortly after spoken to the disciples—the Twelve and the other avowed followers of Jesus—so manifestly forbids the allegorical interpretation, that teachers are usually careful to keep to its parabolic use and point out that only one obvious lesson must be sought in it. The lesson is explicitly given by Jesus in verse 9. The unjust steward is an example to Christians of the importance of looking beyond the present to the long future, and of turning all the opportunities of this world—the mammon of unrighteousness—to account for that purpose. *It* will "fail," but it is possible so to use it that our spiritual growth may be promoted, our heavenly home secured. Thus those earthly goods in which are such elements of danger—wealth, education, pleasure, opportunities of all kinds—being used to good purpose, may each become a friend to greet us at the last and make more abundant our welcome into the everlasting habitations.

The complementary parable of the rich man and Lazarus was spoken to the disciples and also to the Pharisees, who, being covetous (vs. 14), derided Jesus with mocking gestures (so the

Greek suggests) on hearing a parable which taught that the true use of wealth was not for this world, but for the next. Here, again, we must keep to the central truth. Our Lord was not teaching that there was anything meritorious in poverty or sinful in wealth, but that wealth is a *stewardship*, and that he who uses it for his own gratification, unmindful of the needs of others, is of necessity unfit for the kingdom of God.

## CHAPTER XXVIII.

THE RAISING OF LAZARUS, AND THE WITHDRAWAL TO EPHRAIM.

John 11:1-54.

BETHANY, now called El-Azariyeh (the town of Lazarus), is less than two miles from Jerusalem (John 11:18), lying in a deep ravine east of the Mount of Olives. There is little reason to doubt that Jesus had visited the family of Lazarus at the time of the Dedication Feast; they were therefore perfectly well aware of his danger. The message which the sisters sent to him when their brother became ill does not express even a wish that he should come to them. They longed for his sympathy; they were not unmindful of that wonderful cure wrought from Cana of Galilee on the nobleman's son in Capernaum. They had no need to ask for his presence.

The answer which he sent to them from Perea must have strangely perplexed them. When it reached them, Lazarus was already in the tomb, for Jesus delayed only two days beyond the messenger, and found after a single day's journey that Lazarus had been four days dead.

Why Jesus delayed for two days to go to them cannot be explained by his fear of danger, nor by any need that the sisters' faith should be tried. The reason must be found in the answer of Jesus to the remonstrances of his disciples, who knew the danger (vss. 8, 16). He was walking in the daylight of his Father's will, obedient to his orders, when he abode two days in the place where he was; as well as when he said, *I go, that I may awake him out of sleep*. The key to all his conduct was ever, *I do always the things that please him* (8:29).

A long day's walk brought them from their Perea retreat to Bethany, and on arriving, Jesus, who knew that the house

of mourning would be crowded with friends (for the Jews deemed it a pious duty to pass seven days of wailing condolence with those who were bereaved), stopped before reaching the village. Not because he was aware that those were hostile Jews who mourned with Martha and Mary, but because he had a heart like ours, and longed, as we should do, for an interview in quiet retirement with those whose grief was also his.

There was no word of reproach in the broken-hearted exclamation with which Martha fell at her Lord's feet. The faith of this woman has surely been underrated. In spite of all which seems to tell against him, her confidence in this Friend is unshaken. She does not, indeed, understand his true nature, and therefore his power. She is sure that he is the beloved of God and that God will grant whatever he may request. And because of her faith the Lord led her up higher, giving her a sublime revelation of the true nature of life (John 11 : 25). She was able to receive it, able to rise above the imperious hope with which she had met him, ready to wait for the salvation of the Lord. And so at Jesus' request (evidently implied, vs. 28), she could go calmly to summon her sister to a quiet meeting with him.

Their desire for privacy was frustrated by the Jews, their guests, who, supposing that Mary was going to the grave for one of the periods of loud wailing that custom demanded, followed after her. There is a touching revelation of the tenderness of the tie between them in Mary's way of meeting the Lord. Just as a little child, who separated from his mother keeps pent up in himself the grief that nearly rends his heart, bursts into tears the moment he sees the beloved face, so Mary, as she saw him, fell down at his feet with tears, in the certainty of his sympathy.

To ask why Jesus, who could raise Lazarus from the dead, should suffer so intensely and with such varied emotions as the word translated *groaned* implies, and as his tears made manifest, is to forget that he was *truly* man — not like us, unsympathetic, half loving, more than half inhuman — and to measure

him by a standard which is not that of true humanity. No certainty of his that joy was coming to them made their grief less real; then, in true sympathy with them, his grief was also real. And by the very perfectness of his sympathy, the presence of the unfeeling, unsympathetic Jews was the most painful. There is certainly a shade of indignation, of repugnance, in the word which is rendered *groaned*.

The Jews felt the reality of Jesus' emotion. As they walked along toward the tomb, *they kept saying Behold, how he must have loved him!* But some of them, less easily run away with by their sympathies, suggest a doubt, not of his power, but of his love. This was the last insult of unbelief, to deny the *love* of Christ. It was this that caused (*therefore*, vs. 38) the renewed agitation of Jesus. So they came to the grave — the private burial place, like that in which he himself would soon lie, with a stone against the door.

It was in the momentary losing of her firm grasp on the newly learned truth what life really is, that the incidentals of death came vividly before Martha's mind. But the Lord called her back to faith by the reminder, not only of what he has just taught her, but by his message of three days before. *The glory of God*, this is the ultimate desire, and the seal of the faith, of every *living* soul.

The prayer of Jesus at the tomb was his last effort to bring those around him into sympathy with him, or rather with his work. Some degree of belief must exist, even in those who stand by, for miracle to be possible, at least in a moment like this, when the humanity of Jesus was all one quiver of intense sympathy. They who stood by must know — must associate his power with God, must gain some glimpse of the perfect oneness of the Father and the Son, before he can recall his dead friend to life. Then, the prayer offered, he *cried out* with the *great voice* as of a multitude who shout: *Lazarus, hither! forth!* He commanded life because he is the Life, and all live to him.

No miracle was performed where none was needed. The



swathings of the grave were not removed by the voice of power, but by the hand of love.

The immediate result of this miracle was precisely what Jesus had foreseen—his own condemnation to death. Alarmed at the increasing number of influential people (vs. 45) who were won to believe in him, the chief priests and rulers summoned the Sanhedrin to what appears to have been an informal, and was probably a “packed” meeting (we know that two members who were Jesus’ friends were absent, Luke 23 : 51, comp. John 19 : 38, 39), and there condemned him to death. They did not deny his Messiahship; they could not deny it, and implicitly they even admitted it (11 : 47, 48). But though Jesus were the Messiah, he must certainly not be accepted as such, for his acceptance, arousing the vigilance of Rome, would be their undoing. Rather, let the Hope of Israel be abandoned. In the existing state of popular feeling they could not secure his condemnation as a violator of Jewish law, and therefore he must be found guilty of treason to Rome. This decision explains the attempt of the Pharisees to ensnare him in his talk (Matt. 22 : 15–22) when he next and for the last time came to Jerusalem.

Caiaphas, who was high priest in that momentous year (he held the office thirteen years), devised this way out of their perplexities. In so doing he uttered a truth, false though in his view and purpose it was; the truth which Jesus during this last part of his life was teaching and living—the truth he had just exemplified in coming to raise Lazarus—the truth that vicarious sacrifice is the law of life as well as of salvation. The proper humanity of every human being begins only when he accepts this law of life, which not only martyrs and mothers have accepted, but the pioneers of every new country, the soldiers of an army, the sailors who draw back on a sinking ship that women and children may enter the boat. This is life, the Spirit of Jesus; the Caiaphas spirit is death, the spirit that will receive all but will give nothing.

For the present they could do nothing. Jesus had not yet concluded the teaching of his disciples, and so his hour had not yet come. For his and their protection he withdrew to the sequestered village, Ephraim, on the slope of Mount Ephraim, once a part of Samaria, but recovered to Judea nearly two centuries before by one of the Maccabees. Here, we may believe, his mother and the mothers of several of his disciples joined them (Matt. 20 : 20 ; 27 : 55 ; Luke 24 : 10, comp. 8 : 3), to share the sacred intimacy of the last weeks of his life.

## CHAPTER XXIX.

### JESUS BEGINNING HIS LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.

Luke 17: 11—18: 17; Matt. 19: 3-15; Mark 10: 2-16.

**N**OTWITHSTANDING that the majority of American and many English scholars even yet put the events included in the lesson—the incident of the ten lepers, the discourses on the coming of the kingdom and on divorce, the parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, and the incident of Christ blessing the little children—in the historic position accepted by the Bible Study Union, it seems impossible that future study of this part of our Lord's life will not lead to the acceptance of an opinion held by an increasing number of European scholars, that these events belong to the last journey from Galilee to Perea, and to the Peraan sojourn before and after the winter Feast of the Dedication. There are chronological difficulties in either case; a satisfactory "harmony" of these chapters of the Gospels will perhaps never be attained; but if ever attained, it will be not through historic investigations but through a more perfect apprehension of the psychological conditions of the time—the state of the public mind, the development of popular views and of the views of the hierarchy as to the claims of Jesus and their probable consequences.

Read with no thought of harmonic conditions, there seems to be no reason why Luke 17:11 should not be a fuller description of the journey mentioned in Matt. 19:1, 2 and Mark 10:1. At that time and for months afterward he was, as we have learned in former lessons, followed by crowds generally sympathetic, at times critical, mainly less well informed, but also less prejudiced than the Galilean multitudes had been.

Such a setting is absolutely required for the events of this Chapter, which can hardly have been duplicated at a later time, when everything conspired to compel a rapid movement and development of thought and feeling with regard to Jesus. Again, it is evident from John 11:55 that those Passover pilgrims who went up somewhat early to Jerusalem, according to a widely followed custom, for purposes of purification, knew nothing of Jesus' whereabouts, as they would surely do if he were making a leisurely progress through the country, according to the present harmony, at the head of a gradually increasing caravan of Passover pilgrims.

For the study of the passages before us this is a matter of minor importance, but it is of importance to get as far as possible a clear notion of the historic development of our Lord's earthly life.

At some period of our Lord's journeyings, drawing near to a village on the border line between Samaria and Galilee, a pitiful company of ten lepers appealed to him from a safe distance for healing. It is hardly likely that a leper colony was established there; rather may it be conjectured from the evident faith of these sufferers (Luke 17: 13, 14) that they, having heard of the healing of a Galilean leper (Matt. 8: 2, 3), and learning that Jesus was to pass that way, had hastily come together from various parts. Their confidence in his power was so strong that they unquestionably obeyed a command that but for faith must have seemed meaningless, and at once set out to do that which would be useless unless their healing took place on the way. The special importance of the incident to us lies in its teaching that want of the grace of gratitude may exist in union with very strong faith, and in making evident the moral ugliness of such a lack. What appears so unaccountable in this story is only too commonly our own experience.

In the course of the Perea sojourn, if we follow Luke's chronology, appears a discourse to the disciples on the coming of the now anxiously expected kingdom, suggested by a ques-

tion of the Pharisees (Luke 17:20). To them Jesus answered only that the kingdom was not that which they expected; for it was already in the midst of them. But to the disciples, after reminding them that this present time was the one to which, in later days, they would look back with longing, he went on to describe that second coming to which he still directed their thoughts. It was only, so to speak, a primary lesson; he was to return to the subject on one of the last days of his life (Chapter XXXVI), but here he gave them a brief glimpse of his future return as something "bright, sudden, terrible, universal, irresistible," but to be preceded by much of trial, and especially by his own rejection. A parable followed (18:1-8) to show that in all these vicissitudes God is a God of *justice*, and therefore that, however great their sorrows, however long delayed the help, they may confidently cry unto him continually. The difficulty will not be with God's long-suffering, but with the continuance of faith through the time of trouble.

The parable of the Pharisee and the Publican which was probably spoken immediately afterward (vss. 9-14) shows the proper state of heart in which these importunate, never-failing prayers should be offered. The Pharisee, in his proud and exclusive self-righteousness, cannot truly pray, cannot offer a prayer through which he may be *justified* before God; it is the humble Publican, not sinless, but profoundly sorry for his sin, ashamed and repentant, who comes into right relations with God.

It must have been in one of the larger towns of Perea, where the hostile influence of Jerusalem more strongly affected the Pharisaic mind, very possibly at the same time and by the same Pharisees who (16:14) derided him after the parable of the unjust steward and the teaching that we cannot serve God and mammon, that a question about divorce was put to him (Matt. 19:3-12) with desire to embroil him with the religious authorities. He had told them (Luke 16:15) that they themselves broke the spirit of God's law, and he had brought up (vs. 18) their views and teachings on the subject

of divorce in proof of his charge. Perhaps, Perea being under Herod's jurisdiction, they fancied that to get him to pronounce without qualification against divorce would array Herodias against him, as before against the Baptist; but their chief purpose, here and always, was to put him in opposition with the Rabbis, and the question (Matt. 19 : 3) was ingeniously calculated to do this, for on the words, "for every cause," the two Rabbinical schools were divided, and he could hardly answer it, they thought, without provoking opposition between himself and one or the other of these schools. But here, as ever, Jesus rose above the sphere of controversy by appealing to high and eternal principles. *From the beginning*, before Rabbis or the Mosaic law, God had shown his divine ideal and had ordained that his glorious purposes were to be carried out through that mysterious distinction of sex which no philosopher has ever fathomed, and that sublime ordinance of dual unity which, above all things else, foreshadows and explains the oneness of the divine and the human. Only one thing could dissolve that holy and typical union — the sin that made it impossible. And yet, the chief thing always is the doing of the will of God. Celibacy is honorable when it promotes that will, though the Jews thought not so.

It was marvellously fitting that at the conclusion of this stern, yet loftily sympathetic discourse, the mothers of the place should bring their children for his blessing. Was marriage indeed so sacred, so divinely typical? Then how near to God's heart must be the little ones by which such a union was blessed! The mothers understood him better than the disciples, who would not have had their Lord disturbed. But since he consecrated childhood by being a child and by blessing children, we have learned to understand something of the solace it must have been to his human heart, sore tired by the contradiction of sinners, to take in his arms these little ones in whose innocence, humility, teachableness, weakness, he saw a fore shadowing of the kingdom of God.

## CHAPTER XXX.

### TEACHINGS BY THE WAY: WORLDLY AND SPIRITUAL WEALTH AND GREATNESS.

Matt. 19: 16—20: 28; Mark 10: 17—45; Luke 18: 18—34.

THE three incidents of this Lesson, though not historically connected, are grouped together from their bearing upon a single thought, the relative character of self-seeking and self-giving, with the closely related thought of the relative importance of material and spiritual things, of things temporary, that is, or things permanent (2 Cor. 4: 18).

The incident of the young ruler belongs historically to the period of the Perea Ministry (Chapter XXIII and following), and therefore *before* the raising of Lazarus (XXVIII). Jesus, with his disciples and friends, was continually surrounded with a Perea multitude; the opposition of the hierarchy was continually growing and known to be growing, though not manifested with such virulence in Perea as in Jerusalem and Galilee; the popular expectation of the speedy setting up of the kingdom was very strong and still growing, and Jesus himself clearly perceived his eventual rejection by his nation. This was the state of things when one day, perhaps the morning after his blessing the little children, as he set forth upon his journey, one came eagerly running to ask of him how he might inherit eternal life. He was a young man of most attractive bearing, a ruler in the local synagogue, a man of rare purity of life, high moral character, and deep earnestness; one of the noble few in that or any age who seek Jesus because they already have deep yearnings after holiness, and feel that he alone can meet them.

No wonder that Jesus, looking upon him, loved him (Mark

10 : 21). It would seem to us that here was one eminently fitted to take that place among the Twelve from which Judas was so soon to fall. And it would seem as if our Lord thought so, too, for he gave him such a call as he gave to no one else except his twelve Apostles — a call to absolute renunciation of earthly things, even the good things of power and influence and wealth used to no unworthy end, for the sake of that which his soul craved, fellowship with the eternal good. His soul had craved perfection and Jesus offered it to him (Matt. 19 : 21). Alas, the sacrifice was too great! He missed the opportunity of his life, which was by absolute self-sacrifice to put himself in perfect harmony with the eternal order: *first*, the kingdom of God and his righteousness (Matt. 6 : 33); *then* the “all other things” which in his life of fellowship with the eternal good he might need — such things as the disciples had, who lacked for nothing (Luke 22 : 35).

It is important to apprehend correctly the teachings of Jesus about renunciation. We must bear in mind their historic setting — spoken, as they were, in a time when the interests of Christ’s kingdom required a degree of self-effacement and renunciation that they do not now when Christian principles are in the very fabric of men’s minds. Not, let us be very careful to observe, because the *principle* is modified; principles cannot be modified; but because circumstances are changed. It is just as hard now as then for one who has riches to enter the kingdom of God, *if the kingdom of God has the second place in his heart*; but it is easier for Christians now to give the kingdom its true place, because they understand its nature better, and because they live in a society where its nature is better understood. The sin of *not* giving it the first place must be incomparably greater now than then, but to those who do give it the first place, the possession of wealth may become the blessing it could not possibly have been then, when riches could be of absolutely no use in promoting the kingdom. The teaching of Jesus here is plain — the teaching of his life and



death — that the Christian spirit, that is, the spirit that longs for fellowship with the eternal good — is one that sees that of necessity the kingdom comes first, whatever else may be desirable or undesirable. There is no schism between this world and the next; to the Christian they are not two realms, but one, God being King over the whole; but the other world is the real, the important, the interesting world; this is important, interesting, *real* only as it subserves that other. Those, whether rich or poor, to whom the first interest is money and what it will buy — food, lodging, clothing, culture, recreation — live in a vain show, a phantasmagoria, a vapor (James 4 : 14). Those, whether rich or poor, whose first interest is the kingdom of God, are partakers in the eternal life.

The self-satisfaction of Peter in discovering (Matt. 19 : 27) that he and his fellow-disciples were conformed to the rule of the kingdom is painful perhaps to see, though it is not unusual in experience. Our Lord did not rebuke him; he understood better than most of us do how genuine and severe had been the self-denial of the Twelve. Rather, he gave them strong encouragement by telling of the rewards that even now, and far more in the end, await those who have followed him in his humiliation. Only there was a warning, meant, we may think, not so much for them as for later Christians, ourselves, for example; the reward is not of debt, not of mercenary calculation. And to illustrate this, Jesus told (20 : 1-16) the parable of the Laborers in the Vineyard, to show that while all should receive their reward, the question could never be, How much have you done or suffered? but, How closely has your heart cleaved to the principle of doing all you can for the kingdom of God?

And now we return to Ephraim, to which Jesús had retired after the raising of Lazarus and the definite resolution of the hierarchy not merely to put him to death, but to do it in such a way as to destroy his moral influence — by the hideous and shameful death of the cross. Yet even here Jesus was in

command. They might put him to death, yet not at their own time, but at his, or rather, at God's. It must be at a great feast, when the nation, as a nation, might have its opportunity to pronounce for or against him.

So he withdrew beyond their reach and gave these last weeks to his disciples, his mother, his faithful women friends. And when the Passover time drew near, being in full harmony with the will of God, he set out upon his return, turning his steps toward Jericho to put himself now at last at the head of the pilgrim caravan and enter Jerusalem as the Messiah of Israel.

On the way, to prepare his disciples for what was before them, he led them apart (20 : 17) from the women, whose tender hearts need not yet be rent by the awful news, and told them that the time had come of which he had twice forewarned them (16 : 21 ; 17 : 22, 23) when he must be delivered up and put to death ; telling them for the first time the shameful manner of the death — crucifixion — and its means, the Roman power (the Gentiles). But even while admitting the deep humiliation to which he would be subject, he revealed his marvellous majesty in the prophecy of the resurrection. They might put him to death, but they could not make him subject to death ; the third day he would rise again.

They could not understand it ; they evidently thought it must be some parable of fearful conflict, bitter defeat, to be quickly followed — in three days ! — by splendid triumph. And with the natural abhorrence of the mind for painful things, their imaginations overleaped the dreadful ordeal and fixed upon the triumphant outcome. Especially the two fiery brothers, James and John, ready to dare and endure all things for the kingdom, found themselves entranced with the thought of that mysterious coming glory of which nothing less than resurrection from the dead could be a fit symbol. They were ready enough to join their mother (20 : 20) in the request that in that kingdom, as always in his humiliation, they might be his closest friends, his most trusted servants, his right and left hand administrators

(vs. 21). Yes, they were ready to endure the terrible ordeal of which he had spoken, to drink the bitter cup (vs. 22).

Oh, the wonderful patience of our Lord! The patience of his repetition of what he had so often taught them in words and so continually in his life, that the greatness of the kingdom is in service, that the humblest place in it is, in fact, the noblest; the dearest privilege not high position, but much ministry! To be first, we must be servant; to be first, we must be like our Lord; not, like the young ruler, finding value and opportunity in wealth, not, like James and John, seeking high responsibility, but like our Lord, who sought not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and who gave his life a ransom for many.

## CHAPTER XXXI.

### FROM JERICHO TO BETHANY: THE CLOSE OF THE LAST JOURNEY TO JERUSALEM.

Matt. 20:29-34; 26:6-13; Mark 10:46-52; 14:3-9; Luke 18:35-19:28; John 11:55-12:11.

OUR Lord's purpose in going from Ephraim to Jerusalem by way of Jericho, instead of by the direct road, was to put himself at the head of the Passover pilgrims. The time of decision had come: that claim of Messiahship which from the beginning he had implicitly made, by cleansing the temple, by miracles, by teachings, he would now explicitly make by a public triumphal entrance into the holy city; yet not after the proud manner of ordinary kings, but in the humble and significant manner announced by prophecy.

Eight days before his crucifixion our Lord drew near to the gate of Jericho, not from the northern, or Ephraim side, but from the east, having gone forward to join the pilgrim caravans, one coming from Perea, and one by the shorter, though uncomfortable route from the north through the Jordan valley. These caravans were nearly, though not quite, the first, and consisted almost wholly of Jews of specially devout minds, carefully obedient to the law of Moses, who went up to Jerusalem a week earlier than was needful, that they might there go through all that was required for ceremonial cleanness. Already there were some Galileans of this class in Jerusalem (John 11:55, 56), watching eagerly for the arrival of Jesus.

These caravans contained a large proportion of his Galilean and Perea adherents. We know that there were thousands in those districts who, with more or less of misapprehension, believed in him, and these would be of all the population the

most devout and most careful to observe the Mosaic laws, still believing, as nearly all of them did, that the Messianic kingdom would be established on the basis of those laws. Jesus could count upon a certain degree of protection from them against the attacks of the hierarchy (comp. Mark 14:2). Thus therefore, surrounded and followed by an enthusiastic and expectant multitude, he drew nigh to the gate of Jericho.

Jericho, the Fragrant, so called from its gardens of roses and plantations of balsams, is now nothing but "a few hovels and a tower on the edge of a swamp." In the time of our Lord it was a city not only of priests, but of traders, the business city of the south as Capernaum was of the north. The rich caravans from Persia passed through it, and both export and import trade and taxes were very large. A large number of tax collectors were therefore needed here, and over them was placed by the Roman government an administrator of the revenues, or "chief publican" Zacchæus by name. Being a Jew he would be doubly hated, because he not only served the Romans in a hateful calling, but because as head of the tax gatherers his opportunities for greedy oppression would be almost unlimited.

Entering Jericho then at the head of the Passover pilgrims, the excitement of Christ's followers was quickly communicated to those in the streets. These were not simply the usual crowd of an important commercial city; it was the custom for the inhabitants of every town to go out to meet a festal band and bid it welcome. The news that Jesus of Nazareth was at the head of this band must have flown like wildfire through the city, and the streets were thronged as never before. The crowd around Jesus soon became so dense that it was impossible for one small of stature to see Jesus by standing on the ground. Zacchæus, the head publican, was short of stature, and longing intensely to see him, he ran before the crowd and climbed into the over-hanging branches of a sycamore tree.

There is good reason to believe that in spite of the bad reputation he still had, Zacchæus was one of the many publicans who repented at the preaching of the Baptist, and received baptism of him. For when Jesus called him down and offered himself as guest at his house, he felt himself compelled by the discontented murmurings of the multitude to justify himself at least in Jesus' sight, by telling him that for some time, probably since his repentance and baptism, he had not "sinned" in the sense of these murmurings; he had obeyed the Mosaic law (Ex. 22 : 1) in restoring fourfold of all wrongful exactions, and besides this, had given, not the fifth, as the strictest Rabbinical law required, but the half, of his goods to the poor. True son of Abraham that he was, not only by blood, but by obedience to the commands of God spiritually apprehended, that day salvation was openly declared to have come to his house; and he was held up as type of those whom Jesus had come to seek and save.

If this event somewhat cooled public enthusiasm, it was aroused again the next morning when Jesus left the city, by the healing of blind Bartimæus. Indeed, the time of miracle working had long been past; all the witness that signs could bear to his Messiahship had been borne. It was purely from compassion that he responded to the importunate appeal of two blind men sitting at the Jerusalem gate of Jericho, who hearing the tramp of a mighty multitude, and learning that Jesus of Nazareth was there, cried earnestly for relief. This miracle stimulated the enthusiasm of the multitude to the highest pitch (Luke 18 : 43), and their conviction that the kingdom of God was immediately to appear (19 : 11) became so strong that it was necessary for our Lord to control it by the parable of the Minæ — the Pounds (A. V.).

The parable was based upon a historic fact well known to all Jews, and especially impressive at this time, because its scene was Jericho. From his palace in Jericho Archelaus, son of Herod (Matt. 2 : 22), had set out for Rome (comp. Luke 19 :

12) to be confirmed in the inheritance of the kingdom of Judea; from it had followed after him a deputation of citizens to say that they would not have him for king (vs 14). To it he had, however, returned as king (vs. 15) in spite of the hatred of his subjects. Here the historical resemblance ceased; it had been enough to fix the minds of the listeners and make them perceive that Jesus spoke of himself as the nobleman, that he had yet to go a far journey before receiving the kingdom, that some of his subjects would rebel against him, and that his own disciples would receive a trust to fulfil against his return. Then came the result: some would be faithful and would receive a reward according as they had proved themselves fit for responsibility, and some who had seen no profit in serving their master would be punished by losing all opportunity of further service. But those who had declared themselves enemies of their Lord were slain that his triumph on his second coming might be complete.

And when he had said these words, Jesus went on before the multitude, his mind completely absorbed in the thought of what now lay close before him.

A six hours' journey brought him to Bethany (John 12:1). It is easy to understand why he made this place his home at this time. He was not safe in Jerusalem (11:57), and he would affront danger only when and so far as his own plans required. And if, as appears reasonable and probable, Lazarus had been with him since his recall to life (12:10, 11, comp. vs. 9), it would be most of all natural that his home would be that of Jesus at this time.

Six days before the Passover was, we understand, the Sabbath, the feast day. Naturally a supper was made for Jesus by his friends; in the house of Simon the leper, Matthew (26:6) and Mark (14:3) say, but whether Simon was the dead father of Lazarus and his sisters, or the dead husband of Martha, or whether, being the father or husband, he had been a leper and was now restored by Jesus, we cannot know.

Martha served (John 12 : 2) and Lazarus sat as guest. Mary, we must believe, sat near, drinking in every word that fell from her Lord's lips.

As she listened and gazed the love in her soul interpreted to her the dreadful words which to all others, however near and dear, were yet a sealed mystery (Mark 14 : 8), and rising, with a heart bursting with love and sorrow, she brought the most costly article, doubtless, in the house. It was an *alabaster*, or vial, of Persian nard, a liquid gum of exquisite fragrance and of rare value. Breaking the vial she poured the perfume first upon the head of Jesus as in a royal consecration, and the remainder upon his feet — an act of homage never until long after this offered even to kings — wiping his feet with the long tresses of her hair, while the delicious odor exhaled through the room, as it has ever since exhaled through the world, the perfect type of self-sacrificing love.

Yet the disciples, slow of heart (Matt. 26 : 8), and especially Judas, the covetous (John 12 : 4, 6), could not understand it so ; they thought only of the waste, of the poor that might have been fed and clothed with the three hundred shillings the nard would have brought — a whole year's earnings of a laboring man. They could not understand — and we do not yet understand — the value our Lord puts upon love and upon *its expression*, any more than they — or most of us — can understand how little, after all, can be done for the poor with money, unless the love that goes with it is more than the money's worth. Surely this incident was recorded to the lasting honor of this woman (Mark 14 : 9), that we may learn to rectify our estimate of values, and learn how dearly our Lord prizes the outward expression of homage and love. And need we ask which of those two would be most ready to give to the poor, Mary who lavished her best upon the Lord, or Judas, the bearer of the bag, who murmured ?

And with one word, spoken not to her, but to the mur-



murders, he showed her that he recognized in her the prescience of love; that he saw that she alone was in such perfect sympathy with him as to understand his teachings: "For in that she poured this ointment upon my body, she did it to prepare me for burial."

## CHAPTER XXXII.

### THE TRIUMPHAL ENTRY, AND THE SECOND CLEANSING OF THE TEMPLE.

Matt. 21:1-19; Mark 11:1-19; Luke 19:29-48; 21:37, 38;  
John 12:12-19.

WE have come now to the last week of our Lord's life — his Week of Suffering. Not that he had not had much of sorrow through the former years, or that this last week of his life did not hold many hours of deep joy. But this was the week in which he endured not only the extremity of physical pain, but the more intense agony of being betrayed by his close companion and friend and forsaken by all his disciples, and the still deeper anguish of knowing that his nation had thrown away the glorious privilege which for thousands of years had been theirs, of being God's elect, chosen to be the repository of divine truth, the medium by which all mankind should be brought to a knowledge of God.

On the morning of Sunday a great number of the inhabitants of Jerusalem (John 12:9), having learned from the Passover pilgrims that Jesus had come and was lodging somewhere outside of the city, joined a multitude of these pilgrims (vs. 12) and went out to hail him and bring him to Jerusalem as King. We must bear in mind that Jesus had distinctly put himself at the head of the Galilean caravan. They all remembered that a year before he had refused to do this, when they had desired to carry him from Galilee to Jerusalem and there proclaim him King (their notion of the Messiah), and they saw in his act at this time an open claim to the Messiahship. In this they were right; they were wrong in still insisting upon their own views of the Messiah's functions and

mission. It has been thought that perhaps by going out to find and bring him in triumphal procession to Jerusalem, they wished so to compromise him as to force him now at last to accept their views and act as they desired; but this is not probable. Rather, they were blinded by their wishes, by their intense desire for a temporal Messiah who should free them from Rome, and therefore they still failed to understand his teachings concerning his mission.

As they went out from Jerusalem bearing the palm branches with which kings were welcomed, Jesus was setting out from Bethany, purposing to enter Jerusalem in such a way as should not only make evident his claim to be the Messiah, but should bring to the popular mind the true Messianic ideal (Zech. 9 : 9).

The site of Bethphage is now unknown, but the Talmud speaks of it as a more important village than Bethany. The two villages were probably close together, though tradition puts Bethphage nearly at the top of the Mount of Olives, where is now the ruined hamlet, Et Tur. Peter and John probably were the two disciples sent to bring from thence an ass's colt, which they would find at the entrance of the village. The answer, "The Lord hath need of him," would be sufficient for any owner at this time, when every one was eagerly expecting that Jesus would take upon himself the functions of the Messiah. Matthew says that the mother ass was also sent for, but there is no room here for the scoff of unbelievers that it was impossible for Jesus to have ridden the two beasts. Neither Matthew (21 : 5), nor Zechariah (9 : 9), from whom Matthew quotes, gives such an impression. To any one familiar with Bible language the prophecy that the Messiah should come riding on an ass is amplified by the explanation that that ass is a colt, a beast never before put to such a use.

As Jesus and his disciples and friends set forth upon their walk they were followed by the inhabitants of Bethany (John 12 : 17) and pilgrims who were lodging with them. The large number of pilgrims who were camping in booths or tents

naturally joined the procession, especially when they perceived him riding upon the ass. It is a customary act of homage in the East to spread the outer garment upon the ground for one greatly revered to walk or ride upon. This they did, cutting branches also from the gardens along the wayside to strew before him. And so going on in his train, along the road that skirts the southern slope of Olivet, they came to a place (Luke 19:37) where a dip in the slope gives a view of the southern part of Jerusalem, Mount Zion with Herod's castle crowning the height. Here probably the two companies met, those from Jerusalem and those who were following Jesus; and the latter, fired by the sight of Jerusalem, the former ecstatic at the view of Jesus at the head of another triumphal procession, both companies burst forth into loud acclaim "Hosanna! Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the Lord! Blessed is the kingdom that cometh, the kingdom of our father David! Blessed is the King of Israel! Hosanna in the highest!"

The Pharisees had their representatives among the Jerusalem multitude, and these remonstrated with Jesus, not trying as before to get him to commit himself by claiming to be King, but to induce him to damp the ardor of the multitude by forbidding their acclaim, as he had done before. But no; this was his hour, the hour of his distinct and open assertion of his Messiahship; so true was the impulse that owned his claim that—to use a prophetic figure which they well remembered (Hab. 2:11)—the very stones would cry out if they were checked in their plaudits.

The first glimpse of Jerusalem was but brief: a swelling of the hill soon shut it off. But as they turned the shoulder of the mount, across the deep intervening gorge of Kidron burst upon them a clear view of the whole city in the perfection of its beauty, sitting majestic on its hills, crowned with palaces and towers, and the glorious temple, a glittering mass of marble and gold, rising proudly above it all. And at the sight

the vision of a dreadful future rose up before our Lord; tears gushed from his eyes as he groaned, "If thou hadst known in this day, even thou, the things which belong unto peace!" Even then, if Jerusalem would but have yielded herself to her Lord, it would not have been too late. But, alas, it was not so, and an awful judgment awaited her in the lifetime of many who stood there.

The tears of Jesus were seen only by those nearest him — his own disciples — and the procession moved on and entered the city. The stir caused by it was very great; but Jesus gave no opportunity for any public outbreak. He entered the temple; perhaps it was the solemn hour of evening sacrifice (3 P.M.). Few of the multitude, probably, were purified, and so this act caused the crowd to melt away. And when all was quiet he returned to Bethany for the night.

On Monday morning as Jesus and his disciples were returning to Jerusalem, occurred the incident of the cursing of the fig tree, evidently with the purpose of teaching a needed lesson. Jerusalem was as exuberant now in professions of allegiance and service as this tree in its too early foliage. The curse upon the fig tree was a prophetic warning of what would befall the nation if, like that, its brave show only hid the absence of fruit. The next morning the disciples saw that the act of God had followed upon the command of Jesus.

The people had openly acknowledged Jesus as the Son of David. Would the priests and rulers do so, giving up their ambitious desires of an earthly kingdom, or their timid fears of breaking with the existing state of things? Since the Passover feast three years before, when he cleansed the temple, they had had time fully to weigh his claim, to perceive that though not such a Messiah as they had hoped for, yet that surely he was the Saviour anointed by God to bring them into the "freedom" of his service; would they accept such a Saviour?

During Monday and Tuesday, the opportunity was given. During these two days it may be said that Jesus reigned in his

Father's house, for it seemed as if priests and rulers had abdicated in his favor. He was not hindered on this Monday morning when he repeated the action of three years before and drove the sellers of cattle and doves and the money changers out of the Court of the Gentiles, and would not permit people to make it a thoroughfare between various parts of the city. When the blind and the lame came to him in the courts now given up to sacred quiet, no one molested him as he healed them all, and when the children, recognizing him, burst forth in the cry, "Hosanna!" though some of the priests remonstrated, the children were not hushed. There is no doubt that fear of the multitude kept the rulers quiet; if they had but known it, this was their day of grace.

## CHAPTER XXXIII.

### CHRIST'S AUTHORITY CHALLENGED.

Matt. 21: 20—22: 14; Mark 11: 20—12: 12; Luke 21: 19.

JESUS and his disciples had spent Monday night either in Bethany or under some easily constructed shelter upon the Mount of Olives, like hundreds of other Pasover pilgrimss His object in lodging outside of the city was to avoid being secretly arrested by the officers of the Sanhedrin who, as we know, had determined on his arrest, but dared not take open measures for fear of a popular tumult. It therefore would seem to be the part of prudence for Jesus not to spend many successive nights in one place.

On returning to the city in the morning, the disciples observed with wonder that the fig tree which Jesus had cursed was now dead. They had already learned from the Lord's words on the preceding day (Mark 11: 14) that the natural punishment of unfruitfulness was barrenness — a lesson that Christians need to lay earnestly to heart. They now are given a further teaching — that the inevitable result of unfruitfulness is death. But as they were more impressed by the fact of the miracle than by its symbolic teaching, Jesus gave them a new teaching from this very fact — that faith in God is the principle by which the material realm becomes subject to the will of man. Lest they should so misunderstand his sentence of the tree as to deem that it gave them warrant for executing vengeance by means of their faith, he told them that this power over matter through faith was only possible to those who forgave all those who had offended them.

They had not long entered the temple when a deputation from the Sanhedrin came to Jesus. It was now the policy of the

hierarchy to discredit Jesus with the people. Already, the multitude were somewhat disappointed because he had not immediately followed up his triumphant entry of Sunday by an overt act of revolution. The cleansing of the Temple on Monday had doubtless appeared to them so significant as to keep alive their hopes, but Tuesday had come and there was no appearance as of any important step to be taken. The Sanhedrin saw their opportunity to turn the chilled surprise of the populace into pronounced distrust, and they sent a deputation representing the three classes of which that body was composed, to inquire specifically into his claims. Referring to his acceptance of the homage of the people, and especially to his cleansing of the temple, they asked by what authority he did these things. They themselves, the rulers and teachers of the people, did nothing which they could not justify by tradition or the ruling of some noted teacher of former days.

One authority, however, the nation had through all its history acknowledged as paramount—that of prophecy. And therefore now to make a clear issue which the multitude around could appreciate, he asked the deputation as to the nature of John's mission. The Baptist had evidently prophesied of him, had proclaimed him as the Messiah. Was John, or was he not, a prophet? The whole question of Jesus' authority lay here for those who could not recognize its deeper source.

The deputation found themselves in a dilemma. They dared not outrage public feeling or stultify themselves by denying the Baptist's prophetic mission; they would not admit it and with it acknowledge that Jesus had ample authority for his acts. Weakly and with bitter mortification they said they could not tell. Naturally, Jesus had no need to pursue the subject further.

But the question gave opportunity for three parables by which, one after the other, he made their discomfiture the more complete. The first was of two sons: one, in whom they were to see the repentant sinners and publicans, though at first



disobedient, yet afterward repented and obeyed; the second, though like themselves professing obedience, yet utterly neglected his father's commands. The lesson was that it is better to repent and turn from sin than to profess a holiness which has no basis of obedience.

The second parable, though more complicated, was no less clear in its meaning. The story of the Rebel Husbandmen was their own story in all its details, even down to the dark crime which (as they supposed, in secret), they were already planning. Jehovah was the Householder who had planted his vineyard Israel under every circumstance favorable for fruit, and given it moral freedom as to results. Again and again his servants, the prophets, had been sent to receive the fruits, and the disobedient nation had beaten and stoned and killed them. As a last resort of mercy he had sent his own Son, and him, too, recognizing him as the Heir, they had wickedly conspired against, purposing to be henceforth independent of all allegiance except of their own will. What, in the nature of things, could be the end of such a people but destruction and the transfer of their privileges to those who would use them in a spirit of obedience? "God forbid!" was the answer of those who stood by, for they perceived the terrible meaning of such a decision.

The deputation were roused to fury by this parable, so manifestly spoken against them. They would gladly have arrested him on the spot and so silenced him, but they dared not, for nothing that he had yet said had in any degree turned the current of popular feeling against him. All that they could do now was to leave him and go away.

Then Jesus spoke the third parable — that of the Marriage Feast of the King's Son. It was in general setting not unlike one that he had once before spoken (Luke 14:15-24), but its purport was far otherwise. That was a parable of grace; this of judgment. No one is to presume so far upon the mercy of God as to think that because he is called by him he may

dispense with the attempt to seek holiness. This is the fatal mistake made by all who do not realize that salvation is salvation from sin. It was the mistake of the Jewish nation, who because they were the Chosen People, felt no obligation to submit themselves to the manifest will of God. The time was no longer a time for the proclamation of the wideness of God's mercy. The hour of decision was at hand. Each one for himself must put on the garment which would bring him into harmony with the will and purpose of God, or be cast into the outer darkness.

## CHAPTER XXXIV.

JESUS' LAST CONFLICT WITH THE SCRIBES AND PHARISEES.

Matt. 22:15—23:39; Mark 12:13-40; Luke 20:20-47.

THE hierarchy had been baffled and put to confusion, but all the more were they determined to make Jesus appear wrong. In secret they decided on their next step, which was a new endeavor to force him to pronounce for a revolution, for the establishment of a temporal Messianic kingdom. Once let him so pronounce and they could secretly denounce him before Pilate and bring about his execution without risk of turning popular feeling against themselves. They therefore sent some of their younger disciples, with some of the Herodian party, who claimed that Herod was the lawful theocratic ruler of the nation, to pretend that they were troubled with conscientious scruples as to paying tribute to Cæsar. Jesus was a good man and afraid of no one. He could tell them: Was it lawful or was it not lawful?

He saw at once their design to force him to speak openly for a revolution. The reiterated teachings of his whole public ministry had been that the kingdom of God is not a temporal kingdom; the Messiah is not a mere temporal King. Calling for a piece of the tribute money, and pointing to the image of Cæsar stamped thereon, he showed them that they had themselves acknowledged his authority by using his money, but that this in no wise infringed upon their allegiance to God. The powers that be are ordained of God. To render unto Cæsar the things that are Cæsar's would not prevent them from rendering to God the things that are God's.

They had failed utterly to embroil him with Rome, but the pretext was too good not to be used; at his trial before Pilate

they did accuse him of the very thing he had distinctly refused to say (Luke 23 : 2).

Having failed with the Herodians, the Sanhedrin now put forward some of the Sadducean party — the free thinkers, who were in general the priestly and wealthy faction of the governing body — to attempt to discredit him with the people. The question was as to the Levirate marriage, the law which had been made to prevent the lapsing of several estates into the hands of a single heir, with the accumulation of large landed properties. The hypothetical case proposed was a *reductio ad absurdum* of this law, but Jesus was not concerned to explain or apologize for the law. He took up the issue presented as to the possibility of a resurrection and the character of the spirit world, and from the Books of Moses, a part of the Scripture which alone the Sadducees considered authoritative, he showed them the witness to the resurrection, since the God of Abraham and Isaac and Jacob is the God of the living and cannot be the God of the dead.

The answer was pleasing to the Pharisaic party, who, even though bent upon his destruction, were not above rejoicing in the discomfiture of their rivals. “Master, thou hast spoken beautifully,” ejaculated one of the Scribes.

Now it was the turn of the Pharisees. The Herodians had tried to entangle him with a question of politics, the Sadducees with a question of speculative philosophy, they would put to him an ethical test — Which is the great commandment in the law? Which of God’s commandments is it most important to obey?

Such a question has no answer, and Jesus did not reply to it. But beginning with that *Shema*, or creed, which was the first religious lesson of the infant Israelite, “Hear, O Israel, the Lord, thy God, is one Lord,” he added that which is at once a summary and an interpretation of the first table of the commandments: “Thou shalt love the Lord, thy God, with all thy heart and with all thy soul and with all thy mind.” This was

the great, the first commandment, but there was a second like unto it, which in like manner summed up the commands of the second table: "Thou shalt love thy neighbor as thyself." In this answer there was absolutely nothing that they could lay hold of. One Scribe, perhaps he who had before been impressed with the beauty of Christ's words (Luke 20:39), was moved to speak in words of approbation, not only warm, but intelligent (Mark 12:32-34), and received from Jesus the approving remark, "Thou art not far from the kingdom of God."

There was no one who durst again test him with questions. But Jesus now had a question for them: What and who in their opinion was the Messiah? Whose Son was he? They had their answer ready, "The Son of David." But if so, how was it that David called him Lord, as the one hundred and tenth Psalm indicates? Those words (Matt. 22:42) show a higher reverence, a more exalted homage than any man gives to his son, however dignified.

The question might well have puzzled those who did not know the repeated teachings of Jesus that the Messiah must be the Son of God. These Pharisees knew those teachings, they understood perfectly well now the import of the passage, but they would not answer, for to do so must have been to own him Messiah and divine Son of God. And so they answered not a word.

But there were multitudes in that temple court who heard him gladly and believed in him, though so soon to fall away from him for a time through cowardice. To them he turned, and to the Twelve who stood beside him, with a warning against the deeds of the Scribes and Pharisees, but not their words, adding a succession of awful denunciations.

It was not because Jesus knew that his doom was sealed, and nothing that he could now say could make it worse, that he thus let loose the vials of his wrath. It was in love that he thus spoke — in love of the great multitude who believed on him, upon whom, in a few short weeks or months, the terrors

of persecution would be unchained, and the deliberate choice offered which a day or two hence they would show themselves so painfully unfitted even to consider. Later, "when new divine deeds should call them to make a new decision," they would remember the picture he now presented of those Scribes and Pharisees who had been their blind guides, and from whom, for their own salvation, they must gain strength to break away. Then they would remember what was his judgment of them, and their eyes would be opened to see their true Leader in the crucified Jesus, not in the Scribes and Pharisees and priests.

The woes now pronounced upon the Scribes and Pharisees were, in general, for the one sin of hypocrisy, brought to light by Jesus under many varying forms. Their petty and minute regulations made it impossible for men to enter the kingdom of heaven. By their quibbles about the gold of the temple and the gift on the altar they had destroyed the sense of sanctity and made everything alike profane; by their minute regulations they had utterly overlaid the duties of real importance; their whole effort had been to make people externally good, to cleanse the outside of the cup and platter, careless of the uncleanness that might lurk within.

Thus they were themselves the very image of that which to every Jew was the type of all pollution, the resting-place of the dead. The blank whiteness of the outside was the more ghastly reminder of the foul corruption that lay within, and such were these hypocritical Scribes and Pharisees, with their fair exterior and their murderous hearts. Well might they build the sepulchres of the prophets and garnish the tombs of the righteous and say they would not have slain them as their fathers had done, had they lived in their days. It was all of a piece with their hypocrisy; no one knew better than themselves that they were the sons of them who slew the prophets, and that there was needed only that step which they were then meditating — the rejection and death of Jesus — to fill up the

measure of the fathers and bring upon this unhappy generation the accumulated punishment of all the sins of Israel.

And at this prophetic thought the heart of Jesus overflowed with divine pity: "O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how often would I have gathered thy children together, even as a hen gathereth her chickens under her wing, and you would not!" Her house was left unto her desolate indeed! For, shortly after speaking these last words of love, our Lord left the temple, left his Father's house, never to return.

## CHAPTER XXXV.

### THE CLOSE OF CHRIST'S PUBLIC MINISTRY.

Mark 12:41-44; Luke 21:1-4; John 12:20-50.

THE chronological order of the events and teachings of the first three or four days of the Passover week will perhaps never be definitely settled. It seems difficult, however, to believe that those which are the subject of to-day's lesson did not occur before that last solemn lament of Jesus over and farewell to the Jewish people, with which our last lesson closed.

The incident of the widow's two mites may have occurred some time in the course of the day of questionings (Tuesday, either after or before the question of the Herodians); that of the coming of the Greeks to Jesus seems to have occurred at the close of the previous day (Monday).

At whatever time the first named of these incidents occurred, there is little doubt as to the place. "The treasury" (Mark 12:41) was under one of the porticoes of the Court of the Women, the great court within the enclosure of the Court of the Gentiles, between it and the Court of the Priests. This Court was surrounded by colonnades, in front of which were placed thirteen trumpet-shaped boxes to receive the gifts of the people — one for offerings previously neglected, others for sacrifices, incense, wood for the poor, or voluntary offerings.

Wearied as he must have been with the contention of sinners, our Lord, sitting under one of these colonnades, saw something that cheered him — a "pauper widow," Mark says, casting into the treasury the gift of two *perutahs*, small brass coins, of which two were worth about one-seventh of a cent, with a purchasing power at that time of perhaps twenty times



as much. There were rich men casting in their large gifts with more or less of ostentation ; but in the sight of God, who does not need, but for his creatures' sakes accepts their offerings, the gift of the poor widow was the most truly valuable of all. To Jesus, so near to the hour of entire self-sacrifice, there must have been something especially comforting in the sight of this poor woman who so gladly and unostentatiously gave all that she had, even all her living ; and he pointed his disciples to the poor woman as an example of the standard by which the true value of gifts to God must be measured. Not by what they will buy, for God needs nothing that our money can buy in the prosecution of his designs for the world, but by the spirit with which it is given, is measured the blessing it receives.

If our Lord's commendation, "this poor widow cast in *more than they all*," meant anything, it meant that a small sum, with God's blessing, would prove more potent than all the rich gifts of ostentation.

It was probably toward the close of one of these days in the temple that some strangers from the West, from Europe perhaps, who had been listening to Jesus' words afar off, felt impelled to beg for an interview with him. As the crowd was thinning, they came to Philip with the request, "Sir, we would see Jesus." These Greeks were proselytes to Judaism ; John says they were "among them that were wont to come up to worship at the feast." They shared the common expectation of a Messiah, but having recently adopted Jewish beliefs, they were less fettered by preconceived notions of what the Messiah ought to be and what would be the nature of his work than were the Jews in general.

Evidently Philip saw something significant in the request, for he consulted Andrew, who appears to have been a particular friend of his. And when these two disciples brought the request of the Greeks to Jesus, probably introducing them at the same time, they found that it gave him a mysterious joy.

As if in the reverential approach of these Gentiles he saw foreshadowed that distant day when all nations should be disciples, he uttered the triumphant words, "Now is the Son of Man glorified!" *The Son of Man*. At the death of Lazarus he had said that *the Son of God* would be glorified by it; then it was the life-giving power of the Father that was manifested; here the self-sacrificing love of the Messiah as *man*, for only by the sacrifice of his human life could salvation come to the Gentiles. His life on earth belonged to the Jews; only by being lifted up from the earth could he draw the nations of the world to him. The reference here, as in the parable of the Good Shepherd, is not to a mediatorial death, but to its element of self-sacrifice. So when he spoke of the grain of wheat, it was not as a figure of the resurrection, as the Greeks understood it in their myth of Ceres and Persephone; but of the absolute surrender of the individual life for the sake of a larger and more abundant life — for the life of the many. Then as the dark vision of the death that must precede that larger life swept over him, his soul (not his heart, see John 14:1 — his affections but not his will) was troubled, and, as in a foretaste of Gethsemane, he exclaimed, "Father, save me from this hour!" Yet he would not draw back; it was the Gethsemane prayer in another form: "For this cause I came unto this hour. Father, glorify thy name." The prayer was wonderfully answered. To his spiritually attuned ear there came a voice from heaven saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again." Some of those who stood there heard only a noise, like the beast who hears the human voice; they thought it thundered. Others, with a higher spiritual intuition, like a well-trained dog (as Godet says), recognized that words had been spoken, though what words they knew not; they thought an angel had spoken; and Jesus told them it was for their sakes, and prophesied of his death in words by which the Jews often spoke of death. Then turning perhaps toward the setting sun, he added,

“Yet a little while is the light among you. While ye have the light believe on the light that ye may become the sons of light.”

What follows in John (12:37-43) is his final summing up of the events of these last days. Though he had done so many signs among them, they believed not. Yet their rejection, though *official*, was not total. Many even of the rulers believed on him; others evidently besides Nicodemus and Joseph (Luke 23:51), and only a time-serving cowardice prevented their standing up for him (John 12:42, 43).

The next paragraph (vss. 44-50) was an utterance of Jesus at some time not specified. They are the last clear proclamation of the fact that he is the revelation of God, and that his mission was a mission, not of judgment, but of salvation; a last clear teaching that eternal life is his who is in harmony with the goodness of God, whose standards of right living are his commandments.

## CHAPTER XXXVI.

JESUS AND THE FOUR ON THE MOUNT OF OLIVES.

Matt., Chs. 24, 25; Mark, Ch. 13; Luke 21: 5-38.

THREE weeks ago we studied the last words of our Lord in the temple, the pathetic lament with which he closed his stern denunciations of the Scribes and Pharisees. Our present lesson follows close upon that passage. It was on going out from the Temple for the last time (Mark 13: 1) that his disciples called his attention to its massive stones and splendid architecture. This magnificent temple of Herod was far more splendid architecturally than that of Solomon had been. Its architecture was strongly influenced by that of Greece, and its colonnades and porticoes were pure Corinthian; only the temple proper, the comparatively small inner shrine, was after the Jewish model. No wonder the disciples were impressed by its beauty and solidity. They believed till long after this that the Jewish ritual and worship were to be those of the Christian Church. How astounded must they have been to hear Jesus' reply, "There shall not be left here one stone upon another that shall not be thrown down."

The full moon of the vernal equinox was already rising as they climbed the steep ascent of the Mount of Olives and rested upon a point that overlooked the city. As he seated himself there, a little apart from the Twelve, absorbed, it would seem, in painful thought, the four upon whom apparently his words had made the deepest impression drew near and began to ask the meaning of those words of his, and how they should know when the doom against the temple would be fulfilled. To their question Jesus answered in the solemn discourse given by Mark in his thirteenth chapter,

and with some important variations by Matthew (ch. 24) and Luke (ch. 21).

To their request for a "sign," Jesus made no definite answer. He gave, indeed, no view of the future which can in any sense be called historical, or from which we can wring any hints as to the date of what Matthew calls "the end of the world." Indeed, he expressly said (Mark 13:32) that he himself did not know it, that it is one of the things beyond the limits of the knowledge of the Son of man. Nor is this a matter with which men are to be concerned. What they are to be concerned with is their own conduct, and this discourse, difficult as it is to understand, and utterly impossible, indeed, if we try to construct a scheme of history from it, is very clear in its practical teaching as to conduct, leading up to the emphatic presentation of the necessity of constant, faithful watchfulness, and most of all, to the fact that it is the urgent duty of Christ's disciples to preach the Gospel.

The conditions under which they were to preach would require this steadfast watchfulness. There would be many rising up with false signs and false promises of deliverance (vss. 5-7); there would be danger to the infant Church from the decay of faith; there would be persecutions. And history has shown us that all these things occurred in the life time of the Apostles. Though no pseudo-Messiah actually appeared between the death of Christ and the destruction of Jerusalem (A.D. 69) — there were very many after that — yet the war with Rome which ended in that terrible calamity was actually brought about in part by the development of a powerful Messianic sentiment. The Jews had rejected Jesus, and now, with no Christ to lead them, they suddenly and madly resolved upon achieving a Messianic condition and kingdom; and this great upheaval of feeling brought about the war in which occurred the most terrible siege and the most awful destruction of a city and its inhabitants recorded in history.

Long before that time the disciples of Jesus would have

experienced persecution. They were to be delivered up to councils, the local Sanhedrins of the towns and villages, and before still more august authorities called to suffer for their faith. One chief purpose of this long discourse of warning is to assure them that neither by their persecutions nor by their death will the cause of truth be jeopardized. They need not be anxious lest in their terror or their ignorance they might on such occasions fail to bear a true and efficient witness; the Holy Spirit would be with them in that hour (Mark 13:11), and though their confession might not avail to save their own lives, the truth was safe; it would be given to them in the hour of persecution or of martyrdom to be efficient witnesses for Jesus.

The description of the age of persecution closes with an apocalyptic vision of the end of the world; a form of description very much used by the Jewish writers from the time of Daniel, and of which what we call Apocryphal literature gives many interesting examples. To us, with our Western nineteenth century modes of thought, such descriptions are nearly unintelligible; we may be very sure they sounded quite differently to the Apostles, a great part of whose reading consisted of such literature.

The parable of the Ten Virgins was spoken at this time to teach the necessity of constant vigilance and a state of perpetual preparation. The five wedding attendants who by slothfulness and negligence of a simple duty found themselves unprepared at the Bridegroom's coming, and therefore shut out from his marriage supper, were in intention faithful, but they had lost the interest, the alertness, of the early hours of service. It is not enough to be numbered among the friends of the Bridegroom, not enough to intend to serve him when the proper hour arrives. We must be always ready, always alert, doing with zeal and earnestness *whatever* he requires of us, though that may be only to tarry inactive and keep our lamp burning bright.

The parable of the Talents which immediately followed was meant to teach another aspect of the same truth; the spirit in which the service should be performed which has been committed to us. In some respects it is like that of the Pounds, told a few days before on the way from Jericho to Jerusalem, but the one pound given to each is a figure of the grace of God which is given to every one; here the gifts are of varying values and signify the special trust with which each one is endowed. To each of us, according to his capacity; mental, moral, physical, are given five talents, or two, or one; for each we shall be held to strict account on our Lord's appearance, and not to use them to the best possible advantage is as truly sin as to misuse them; to have no interest in the profit of our Master, the furtherance of his plans, is as truly sin as to work against those interests.

The teachings of this memorable evening — Wednesday in Passion Week — were closed with a prophetic parable of the Last Judgment, when all will be judged by our Lord Jesus Christ — not, we must notice, *tried* by him, but *judged* in accordance with the results of that long trial — life. The obvious teaching of this passage, which we too much forget, is that the basis of that judgment is not what men have believed, not what they have felt of spiritual uplift or of love to Jesus, but how they have dealt with their fellow-men, whom Jesus so loved as to give his life for them, whom he so loves that to perform a service to the meanest criminal — to one in prison — is the same as to have done it to him. Not our creed, not our acts of worship, not our professions of devotion, not even our gifts of money, though these cost us much self-sacrifice, but our *personal service* of the poor, the sick, and the wicked, is the test of Christ's approval of those who profess his name.

## CHAPTER XXXVII.

### THE LAST SUPPER.

Mark 14:12-31; Luke 22:7-38; John 13:1-30, 36-38;

Matt. 26:17-35.

THE difference between the date of the Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples, given by the Synoptics and that given by John, is very evident to the general reader; the former writers apparently assert that it took place at the very time of the passover, and was indeed the Passover. We may observe, however, that all three Synoptics (Matt. 26:17; Mark 14:12; Luke 22:7) distinctly speak of the day as that of *unleavened bread*, and both Leviticus (23:5, 6) and Numbers (28:16-18) make a distinction between the Passover day and the feast day. Though it is not such a distinction as serves to remove our difficulty, it sufficiently proves the existence of usages which we do not perfectly understand, and of customs varying perhaps at different times. We may not improperly gather from Luke 22:15 that this Last Supper of Jesus with his disciples was purposely taken at a time not customary ("I have desired to eat this passover with you *before I suffer*"). In any case, we cannot doubt that John is accurate in fixing the day as *before the feast of the Passover* (John 13:1); this is evident from the minuteness with which, from his memory as an eye-witness, he details the succession of events, and also because it is inconceivable that the Pharisees, with their scrupulous insistence on literal ceremonial obedience, should have profaned their most sacred feast day by sending the high priest's guard to arrest Jesus, and by the councils, the business, the hurrying to and fro which were connected with his prosecution and condemnation. Such action would ill have become those who



condemned Christ for his work of beneficence on the Sabbath day.

The sacred feast was shared by the Twelve alone. Not even his mother and the beloved Bethany family and the women whose faithful ministry was even yet not ended, were admitted. There were two reasons for this: the Lord's last acts, his last words of counsel and prayer, must be of a nature adapted precisely to the needs of those who were to carry on his work and to none others; and then there was the necessity of secrecy. Already the betrayer had made his secret compact with the hierarchy to give up his Lord into their hands, and it is very evident that Jesus had made arrangements with a trusty friend in Jerusalem to provide a room of whose whereabouts even his most confidential disciples were ignorant.

The preparations were all made, and Jesus with the Twelve sat down to supper. His first words (Luke 22:15) were of the great longing he had felt to take this festal meal with them before his sufferings; before the next one all must be fulfilled. Even with the sad premonition of his sufferings ringing in their ears, the disciples began to dispute as to precedence (vs. 24), doubtless from the strong desire each felt to be next his Lord at this solemn feast, but with a love deeply tainted with selfishness. Jesus did not rebuke them; on the contrary, after reminding them that he who served most was really chief (vss. 26, 27), he spoke lovingly of their loyalty to him (vs. 28), and told them of the glory and honor awaiting them in his kingdom.

His love for them indeed grew stronger as the time of trial came (John 13:1, *loved them to the uttermost*). Just because the near approach of his hour made him the more vividly conscious of his glorious origin and destiny, his tenderness for *his own* increased. Therefore, he gave a new and more perfect manifestation of his deathless love in an act the more significant because he knew (vs. 2) that his betrayer was in the little company; he arose from table and girded himself as a servant and washed their feet.

This act was *not* a lesson of humility. Humility is a Christian grace, but it is not the fundamental law of the kingdom. Far less is it an illustration of the wondrous condescension of our Lord. It is a grave error which teaches that *albeit* Jesus was aware of his high origin and destiny, he performed such an act of service. *Albeit?* nay, it was *because* he knew all this. It is *knowing* that all things are *given into his hands, and that he came forth from God and goeth to God, that he riseth from supper* and prepares himself, as a servant, for menial service. The act is one of glorious harmony, not of startling contrast.

Until he came to Peter not one of them had thought of putting into words the perplexity he might have felt; but Peter's impetuosity of feeling rushed into expression, *Lord, thou! my feet washest!* Never in all his life before had he so deeply felt the majesty of his Lord; not even at the first moment of startling self-revelation (Luke 5:8) had he so realized the wide distance between himself and his Master. But he was far enough from apprehending the really antipodal nature of that distance. It was *because* Jesus took upon him the form of a servant, *therefore*, in the very nature of things, God hath highly exalted him (comp. Matt. 18:4).

Of course Peter, when once he caught a glimmering of his Lord's meaning, rushed to the opposite extreme; from "Not while the world lasts shalt thou wash my feet!" to "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head." Is washing indeed a condition of fellowship with his Lord? Then the more of it the better. The writer of this chapter well understood the impulsive, loving nature of Peter. Still, neither he nor the others understood the meaning of Jesus' act, nor could answer the question with which, having once more sat down among them, Jesus broke the impressive silence, "Do ye understand what I have done unto you?"

No, they did not understand, nor has the world, in nineteen centuries, yet understood the law of the kingdom of life. Christian eyes are still blind to the dignity and beauty of

service. A world in which "I am among you as he that serveth," shall be the patent of real nobility, in which honor and respect and love, yes, and efficiency, are gauged by that law, is simply inconceivable to the best of us as anything more than a vague vision. Yet heaven, we must believe, is such a world, and earth, when truly Christianized, will be just such a world, if it be not, indeed, heaven. We must observe that Christ does not say *much more, then*, but *also*, ye ought to wash one another's feet. Not our inferiority but our likeness to him makes such action a duty. It was his very divinity and authority which made service the law of his existence as it is of God's: "Ye call me the Master (the Teacher) and the Lord, and ye say well, for I am. If I, then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye ought also" to do such things, emulating his example who has shown what is the highest type of life.

The Paschal meal began; the words of blessing, the sharing of the first cup, the breaking of "the bread of affliction," and distributing of the lamb — "the body of the Passover." And the shadow, not of anticipated suffering, but of the disloyalty of a friend, grew dark over the Saviour, and he groaned, "Verily, verily, I say unto you that one of you shall betray me." Each heart, conscious of weakness yet warm in love, prompted the agonizing question, not, "Is it he?" but "Is it I?" Only Judas did not ask.

The doubt was too dreadful to be borne by one so undisciplined as Peter. He made a sign to John, who reclined next to Jesus, to ask who it was. The question was asked and answered in an undertone, and no one else understood the meaning of the roll of thin bread dipped in the bitter sauce and handed to Judas. But it stirred his conscience — did Jesus really know? "Is it I, Rabbi?" he muttered, and Jesus answered that it was. From that moment it was intolerable for him to remain longer. Satan took full possession of the heart now abandoned to evil (John 13:27). A word of permission from Jesus, understood only by himself, and he turned

his back upon the Light of the world and went out into the night. The convenient time had come (Mark 14:11); he would find the high priest and ask for the temple guard and some Roman soldiers to make the arrest. His going out lifted the dark shadow from the soul of Jesus, and he came out into the light of the glory that should follow his sacrifice (John 13:31). He gave them his last command — to love one another, not according to the Golden Rule (Matt. 7:12), but according to the love wherewith he himself loved them. He told them that he was going where they could not follow, warning Peter that far from dying for him he would soon deny him, and then, the supper being over, the third cup, the cup of blessing, was drunk, and Jesus once again took bread and broke it and passed it to his disciples, as a token of his body, and the fourth and last Passover cup as a token of his blood, bidding them do this in remembrance of him.

## CHAPTER XXXVIII.

### OUR LORD'S FAREWELL DISCOURSES.

John 13 : 31-35 ; Chs. 14-17.

OUR Lord had revealed himself to his disciples as perfect Love by deeds (John, ch. 13), showing that true love is utter unselfishness, boundless diffusion, a fountain of life, a source of blessing. He next revealed himself as perfect Love by words of counsel and hope (chapters 14-16), and of prayer (ch. 17), bringing them into communion with the Father through his own communion with him.

Judas had been dismissed and had gone out into the night ; the commemorative Supper had been eaten, and Jesus turned to his own and spoke of his approaching glory, and put into words his former act, giving the new commandment of the Kingdom, the law of love which his own death would interpret. Peter interrupted with a question about his going away and a profession of entire devotion, and was met by the terrible prophecy of his denial. How startling and overwhelming it was we may divine from the fact that from this time Peter, who had been very prominent all through the evening, spoke not another word. With the vivid consciousness of all that was before him made more vivid by this incident — seeing in the immediate future the bruised body and the shed blood and the awful consciousness of a whole world's sin — our Lord's heart went out in the desire to comfort and strengthen and warn, not only the crushed and amazed Peter, but the others, bewildered and startled by all that had taken place. "Let not your heart be troubled," he said, assuring them, in spite of all that was to come, that their true ground of confidence was not to be shaken. "Believe in God ; in me also believe." The comfort

is that he is going to the Father, and the profound significance of this fact.

It is not intended that in this course of lessons we thoroughly study the deep meaning of our Saviour's teachings; at a later period we may hope to take up such a course of study. Here it is simply the outline of thought in these four marvellous chapters that we want to discern. The significance of the fact that the source of comfort is not in the continued earthly companionship of Jesus, but in his going to the Father, is brought out in three conversations, with Thomas, with Philip, and with Judas Lebbæus, and further developed by the law of the progress of revelation: its condition, obedience (14 : 23, 24), its mode, the illumination of the Holy Ghost, and the endowment of the peace of God (vss. 25-27). This part of the discourse closed with an appeal to them to so reciprocate his love for them as to rejoice that he was to enjoy so blessed a change as departure to the Father. Then the manner of his departure is touched upon — *the ruler of the world cometh*; with the asseveration which none but the one sinless Son of Man could make, that this ruler, the evil one, had *nothing in him*; that his perfect harmony with the will of God, his perfect conformity to absolute truth and goodness, left nothing on which the prince of darkness could lay hold. Yet as a proof of his love to the Father, and in accordance with the Father's commandment (which resulted from the love of God for the world, 3 : 16), he would submit himself, not to Satan, but to God, in giving up his life.

The closing words of the fourteenth chapter, *Arise, let us go hence*, clearly refer to a change of scene. It is impossible now to decide whether the words and the prayer which follow were uttered in that "upper chamber" after they had risen from table, or whether in some pause in their walk to the Mount of Olives. Perhaps the symbolism of the opening words of chapter fifteen was suggested by a sight of the fires in the vineyards, where the prunings of the vines were being

burned. There seems to be no reason why the words and prayer should not have been uttered in some sequestered spot between the house which they had just left and the brook Kidron.

The fifteenth and sixteenth chapters properly form one section in three parts. In 15:1-10 the teaching is of the principle on which is grounded the keeping of the "new commandment" of Christ, the law of love. In the other two parts, the effect of the working of that law is shown. These are (vss. 11-27) to reveal the highest joy, that found in self-sacrifice, and (16:1-33) to preserve an unshaken faith through all the vicissitudes of life.

In calling himself the *true* Vine, Jesus uses the word, as often before, in the sense not of the reverse of false, but of the *real*, that which conforms to the ideal. The meaning of the parable is that Christ and the Church are organically one, his life is the life of every believer — every branch. Though apart from Christ the branch (vs. 8) can bear no fruit, yet, that vital union maintained, he has not to concern himself with fruit-bearing; *that* takes place by a natural law; to bring forth much fruit is the inevitable result of abiding in Christ. So prayer is answered (vs. 7) by a law as truly organic, for one mind, one will are in Christ and in him who abides in him, even as one life throbs through the veins of the vine and its branches. This fellowship with Christ is of the same nature as his fellowship with the Father, conditioned *not* on faith, not even on love, but on obedience, and this again in the very nature of things, for obedience is as much the law of being of one united to Christ as it is the branch's law of being to be obedient to the character of the vine.

The application of this truth follows (vss. 11-27). The effect of this organic unity with Christ is first to create the highest and most perfect type of joy — that which inheres in self-sacrifice. The conflicting forces of the world and the Holy Ghost will be in very energetic opposition, but the testi-

mony of Christ which he shall ever bear will be the strength of his disciples for a perpetual witness bearing on their part of the real unity between themselves and their Lord (vss. 26, 27).

The eighteenth verse of this chapter is the theme of the next part of this discourse, which is found in the sixteenth chapter, and is designed to maintain faith in the heart of the disciples during all the time that they shall be subject to these conflicting forces. The first fifteen verses give a clear statement of their condition under this conflict. The remainder of the chapter shows its ultimate result, the working out in them of the same joy which sustained their Lord in his conflict with sin, leading up to the shout of triumph with which, on the eve of his Passion, Jesus closes his last conversation with his own: *In the world ye have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I HAVE OVERCOME THE WORLD.*

It seems almost an act of sacrilege to attempt to interpret the words with which our Lord closed his discourse by communion with his Father. It contains the very essence and meaning of all prayer — not as supplication, but as communion, the highest form of intercourse between man and God.

Though the communion of the Son with the Father is so perfect in this prayer, we still feel that Jesus is conscious of the presence of his disciples; the prayer is for their comfort and strengthening as well as his own. He wanted them to recognize the future glory and joy that they might be prepared to endure the coming sorrow.

The glory to which he looked forward was the saving of men (vs. 2, Revised Version “all flesh — that whatsoever thou hast given him, to them he should give eternal life”), and bringing them to true life in sharing the life of God (vs. 3). He offered to his Father his earthly work, now potentially finished, and overleaping in mind the hours of human agony, looked forward now (vs. 5) to a new investiture as the Incarnate Word with that “radiance of glorification” which as Eternal Word he had “beside the Father before worlds were.”



Then followed the prayer for the Apostles, whose training had been the most important part of Christ's work. The disciples were God's in an especial sense, not by predestination to eternal life, but by a call to a special service. Often he prayed for the world (vs. 9), but not now — this solemn sacerdotal prayer was for his own, his disciples first and after them (vss. 20-26) for the Church in all ages. These were in the world and he was going to God (vs. 11); he tenderly appreciated that their danger lay in their failure in his absence to realize their own essential unity, that they were really one even as he and the Father are one. They were not of the world, they had been raised to the sphere in which Christ himself continually dwelt (vs. 16), and therefore they could be intrusted with a mission to the world (vs. 8). But for this they needed a special and potent consecration — to be sanctified. The word does not mean *purified*, but made *holy*. Only the truth can make men holy; it was by the power of the truth that Christ kept himself from contact with the world, being in it but not of it, as all his own should be. For their sakes Christ himself sanctified himself (vs. 19); for the reason, not that they may be *saved*, but that they may be *holy*, "that they themselves may be sanctified in truth."

The prayer includes (vss. 20-26) all those who should believe on him through the word of his Apostles, those whom he sent into the world to testify to the truth. The same glorious possibility of union one with another is theirs through the same vital union with the true Vine which was the experience of the Apostles. In these days of division, when earnest efforts after church union are conscientiously thwarted by many who believe that denominationalism is best and furthers the spread of the kingdom, let us all earnestly ask what is the meaning of this dying prayer of Jesus, "that they all may be one," and of the reason he gives for this prayer, "that the world may believe that thou hast sent me." Do we indeed desire that the world may believe? Then let us hasten

to bury our differences and seek for the true ground of union, our vital union with Christ, that all the world may see and believe that the love wherewith the Father loves the Son is in us, and he himself in us.

## CHAPTER XXXIX.

### OUR LORD IN GETHSEMANE.

Matt. 26 : 36-56 ; Mark 14 : 32-52 ; Luke 22 : 39-53 ; John 18 : 1-12.

ON the slopes of Mount Olivet, over against Jerusalem, there was an oil press, perhaps entirely unused, certainly not in use at this season of the year. Near it was a garden, or rather, an enclosed olive orchard. Gethsemane was a favorite retreat of our Lord when he desired to be apart from the thronging multitudes and alone with his disciples. Thither on that night in which he was betrayed he led the Eleven, after the Last Supper and the last counsels and the last high-priestly prayer.

Of that midnight hour in Gethsemane it seems almost sacrilege to write. Who can enter into the mystery of that struggle when the tempter, having three years before departed from him *till a favorable season* (Luke 4 : 13), now returned for a final effort to compass the ruin of the human race? As at that former time, he had made to pass before Jesus as in a vision all the kingdoms of earth and the glory of them, so now he doubtless brought home to him with horrible vividness the sorrow and the shame that were before him : the bitter agony of the cross, the infinitely more bitter agony of a full consciousness of a whole world's sin.

Jesus had left his disciples at the gate of the garden with the sad injunction, " Pray that ye enter not into temptation," and taking with him his dearest friends, Peter, James, and John, to watch — for he knew that Judas would shortly be there and he would not be taken unawares — he went on a little farther, " about a stone's cast," and throwing himself upon the ground, he poured out his soul in prayers and supplications with

strong crying and tears (Heb. 5 : 7), begging that the bitter cup might be spared him, yet in the same breath praying that the will of his Father might be done. Never more truly man than when he was about to enter upon the supreme act of the divine redemption of a sinful world, with no thought of giving up the great undertaking for which he had come into the world, his human soul yet reached out to take hold of the omnipotence of God. If it were but possible that some other way might be provided!

Three times the prayer was repeated, and by degrees the dark cloud of temptation was dissipated by the sheer force of a will in perfect harmony with God's will; the answer came, not in the provision of some other way of saving the world, but in a clearer realization of his oneness with the Father, and the essential correspondence of his human will with the divine will: *O My Father, if this cannot pass away except I drink it, thy will be done.*

His three nearest friends, overcome with the excitement and bewilderment of the evening, and not suspecting the meaning of Judas' absence, were not watching with him as he had sadly requested; they were "sleeping for sorrow" (Luke 22 : 45). Twice he had come back to them, his sore heart longing for sympathy, and had found them so. Yet he did not upbraid them. "Sleep on now, and take your rest," he said—he knew that there would be little sleep for them in the coming hours. The third time, as he came, he saw the glancing of lights among the trees and heard the tramp of many feet, and he waked them with the words, "Arise, let us be going; behold, he is at hand that betrayeth me."

Often before this Jesus had met (as by appointment) his disciples here (John 18 : 2). It had been their place of rendezvous, whenever for any reason it had seemed wise that they should not all walk together through the streets of the city. Judas well knew where to lead his party of arrest. This consisted of a detachment of the cohort of Roman soldiers (stationed in the

Tower of Antonia, to keep order during the Passover season), with the temple officers, and a certain number, at least, of the members of the Sanhedrin (Luke 22 : 4, 52). The body was a formidable one ; it is evident, especially from the presence of the chief captain (chiliarch) of the cohort (John 18 : 12), that the Sanhedrin feared not only the resistance of the disciples, but an attempt by the populace to rescue Jesus, or to prevent his arrest, and that they had succeeded in inspiring Pilate with this fear. It was because Judas knew how dense were the shadows under the trees, that, at the time of the Passover full-moon, he had seen to it that the arresting party were provided with *lanterns and torches* as well as with *arms* (vs. 3).

Serene and confident after his agony, Jesus, knowing all the things that were coming upon him (vs. 4), stepped forth from the shadow of the trees and the circle of disciples, clustered around him with some confused purpose of protection, with the question, "Whom seek ye?" His action rendered needless the traitorous kiss of Judas.

The reply, "Jesus, the Nazarene," showed contempt ; they were certainly not prepared for Jesus' majestic answer, "I AM." To *Judas, who was betraying him*, who had retreated after that useless, traitorous kiss, and "was standing with them," the words must have brought a rush of memory. He had heard them on that stormy evening on the lake (6 : 20), when to him, as to all the other eleven, they had spoken courage and calmness in exchange for terror and distress. He had heard them in Jerusalem, at the Feast of Tabernacles, when they had brought terror and rage to the hearts of the hating Jews (8 : 58) ; he had heard them that very evening (13 : 19), sitting for the last time in the little company of *Christ's own*, when they had spoken comfort and strength to all who heard them — to all but the one, who, *having eaten bread with him, had lifted up his heel against him*. If the majesty of the words was such, now, that those others who heard *recoiled* in terror and *fell to the ground*, with what awful weight must they have

fallen upon the heart of Judas, who knew, as they did not know, what words of power they were!

Though the arresting party had gathered themselves up after their first shock of terror, the awe upon them forbade their taking further action. Jesus himself aroused them with the repeated question; not because he would hasten into danger, but because he would save his disciples. They must definitely commit themselves as to whom they sought, that no pretext might afterward be found for the arrest of any other of the company. The event narrated by Mark (14: 51, 52) shows that such a precaution was by no means needless.

Their answer permitted him to draw the conclusion which he desired. Since they had been sent to arrest him only, he could stipulate that the others might go their way. At this the valor of Peter blazed up. Luke tells us that his hasty action was because *he saw what would follow*; this vivid apprehension of danger to his Lord, characteristic of a strongly imaginative mind, prevented his taking in, as the other disciples did, the import and purpose of Jesus' words. Luke also tells us where he got his sword, and the fact that it was unlawful to carry a sword on a feast day appears to be an undesigned testimony to the correctness of John in placing the death of Jesus on the day preceding the evening of the Passover. The high priest's servant was probably pressing forward with a zeal and assumption of importance, which rendered him peculiarly obnoxious to Peter.

Little did Peter think how far he was from advancing his Master's cause by his ill-advised championship. Very little was wanting at this moment to deprive Jesus of the power of saying to Pilate, "If my kingdom were of this world, then would my servants have fought," and so of vindicating the true nature of his kingdom, the true purpose of his life on earth. Doubtless the prompt action of our Lord in healing the wound of Malchus was all that prevented an onslaught upon the disciples, which soon, night though it was, would

have aroused the populace, especially the strangers from Galilee, as ready as they had been on Palm Sunday to join in a popular demonstration, and so would have ended in a disastrous tumult.

The Synoptics do not mention the binding of Jesus until after his examination before Pilate (Matt. 27:2; Mark 15:1; Luke does not mention it at all). The strong impression made upon John, as last of all the eleven, perhaps, he "forsook him and fled," was of the whole party, the band and the chief captain and the officers of the Jews (John 18:12), closing up around Jesus as they violently seized and bound him, evidently not yet relieved of their fear of some act of power on his part.

## CHAPTER XL.

### THE TRIAL OF JESUS.

Matt. 26 : 57—27 : 31 ; Mark 14 : 53—15 : 20 ; Luke 22 : 54—23 : 25 ;  
John 18 : 12—19 : 16.

THE soldiers and temple officers who arrested Jesus had evidently received orders to take him first of all to the palace of Annas (John 18 : 13), the father-in-law of Joseph Caiaphas, the high priest. Annas was notable for subtle craftiness. It was his purpose, while waiting for the assembling of the hastily summoned Sanhedrin, to extract some confession from Jesus which could be used to his disadvantage on his trial before that body. He questioned Jesus therefore concerning his disciples and his teaching, endeavoring to extract from him something which would give ground for the accusation that he had formed a secret society inimical to the hierarchy or to Rome. But Jesus maintained that all his teachings had been spoken openly to the world and appealed to the public and to the rulers of the people, all of whom were acquainted with his teachings. The only answer was a blow from one of the attendants, the first of a long series of outrages upon the justice which should attend the examination and trial of a prisoner.

Meanwhile, Peter and John had so far regained courage as to follow their Lord, and through John's acquaintance with the servants of Annas had gained entrance to the court of the palace. There Peter, asked if he were not one of Jesus' disciples, was again overcome with fear and denied it.

From Annas Jesus was led to Caiaphas, in whose house, since the temple gates were now shut, the Sanhedrin was assembled, at least those members of it who could be trusted to come to one



conclusion. Only twenty-three of the whole number, seventy-one, were necessary for the validity of a sentence. We are expressly told that Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea were not present (Luke 23:50; comp. John 19:39).

It was unlawful to pass a criminal sentence on the day of condemnation, or for the Sanhedrin to sit on the Sabbath or on a feast day. We know that the former law was broken (the day counting from sunset) in the case of Jesus, who was sentenced the next morning after his arrest. This law might be broken with more impunity and less scandal than the other, as to holding court on a feast day—a point which enters into the discussion of the day of Christ's death.

Annas had found it impossible to fasten upon Jesus a charge of secret conspiracy, and nothing remained to the Sanhedrin but to attempt to convict him of public error. But here a difficulty arose in the factions into which that body was itself divided. Not to mention the radical differences between Pharisee and Sadducee, the minds of men were divided as to the character and work of the looked-for Messiah, and not less as to the character of Jesus' teachings and Messianic pretensions. All their determined search for false witnesses (Mark 14:55) resulted in nothing because of these conflicting views. The midnight hour and the necessity for secrecy (for they still "feared the people," Mark 11:32; 14:2) made it difficult to find many witnesses outside of their own number, and urgent as was the desire of all the council to condemn him, no two of them could agree as to the nature of his offence (vs. 56). The excitement of the council became ever more intense as their desire was thus baffled by themselves, until at last the high priest, almost beside himself with rage, sprang into the center of the room, where Jesus stood (vs. 60) before the semi-circle of his judges, and receiving no answer to his threatening question, he put to him the solemn oath, adjuring him by the living God to state definitely his claims.

Up to this time the Lord Jesus had kept silence; but this

solemn appeal he would not refuse to answer. Did his judges realize the hideous irony of that appeal — that he, a prisoner at their bar, should resolve their doubt whether he were “the Christ, the Son of God” or no? Did they realize the awfulness of his answer, what it meant for them and for all mankind? *I am; and ye shall see the Son of Man sitting on the right hand of power and coming with the clouds of heaven.*

No, they did not realize it; they only rejoiced that now they could convict him out of his own mouth. With all the pretended horror of rent clothes they adjudged him guilty of blasphemy, and then followed a scene of infamy, of dastardly indignity, too hideous to repeat (vs. 65; Luke 22: 63–65).

And while this was going on, Peter, warming himself beside the glowing brazier in the court, had twice again denied his Lord. And as the cock crew a band of guards appeared in the courtyard leading Jesus, with every mark of insult, from the audience of the high priest to their guard-room, to await the morning. And the Lord turned and looked upon Peter. That look broke his heart; he remembered the warning, remembered his protestations, and overwhelmed with repentance and shame, he went out and wept bitterly.

We must keep constantly in mind the need of haste in the proceedings of the Jews, who exceedingly dreaded a rescue of Jesus by the people, especially the Galileans, present in large numbers at the feast. At the earliest possible moment, as soon as it could be called day (Luke 22: 66; Mark 15: 1), they hurried Jesus to the temple and there reconvened as a legal body to go through the form of his condemnation. This done they led Jesus to Pilate for the necessary ratification of their decree. Pilate, who had granted the Roman soldiers for the arrest, had doubtless been quite willing to agree to despatch the business as early as was lawful, nothing being so much dreaded by the Roman governors as an uproar among the people at a festival season, when the city was overcrowded.

There was a man not far off, watching with tortures of

remorse unspeakable, the result of the long night's trial. Hardly had Jesus been led away to receive his sentence from Pilate when the wretched creature rushed into the Sanhedrin court, and throwing down the thirty pieces of silver, groaned, *I have sinned in that I betrayed innocent blood.* Did he hope even then to repair his awful wrong? The cold sneer of the priests, "What is that to us? See thou to it," showed him his mistake. And he, too, *went out*, not like Peter, to weep bitterly and repent of sin, but in the blackness of despair to hang himself and go to his own place.

Pilate, the Roman governor, is shown by history to have been a most unrighteous, arbitrary, and cruel man. He had many times outraged the religious and national feelings of the Jews, and while they hated and feared him, they also despised him; more than once they had succeeded in overriding his authority by sheer force of mob violence. He was now in the magnificent new palace of Herod the Great, in the spacious park over against the temple hill. Thither shortly after six o'clock the company of Sanhedrists arrived, bringing Jesus under a strong guard and followed by a crowd, not of devout Passover pilgrims, but of the city rabble which always collects at such a sight.

The most striking feature in the account of the trial of Jesus by Pilate, and the key of Pilate's whole conduct, is his endeavor to avoid the responsibility of convicting Jesus. He left no hopeful means untried to release him. All the Roman in him recoiled against condemning an innocent man, and of the innocence of Jesus he had from the first little doubt. He first tried to throw him back upon the Jews (John 18:31). This failing, he grasped eagerly at the hint that Jesus was of Herod's jurisdiction, hoping to put off the responsibility upon the king (Luke 23:5-7). Failing again in this, he resorted to the well established custom which granted the release of one prisoner as a token of respect to the sacred feast, and proposed that Jesus should be set free according to the custom.

It was of no avail. The Jews refused the Son of God, their own Messiah, and clamored for the release of the brigand and conspirator, Barabbas.

Still actuated by his dread of condemning an innocent man, Pilate attempted to satisfy their enmity and hatred by inflicting upon Jesus the terrible and degrading punishment of scourging. Under this torture, so terrible that Cicero calls it the intermediate death, many a condemned man has died. No formal judgment against Jesus had been pronounced, yet Pilate condemns him in his own interests to a part of capital punishment! To such base truckling to the passions of the people, the representative of Roman justice has come!

It was with the hope of moving their hearts to pity, if not to justice, that Pilate caused Jesus to come out, wearing the crown of thorns and the garment of contempt with which the brutal soldiers had invested him, and after definitely pronouncing him to be "Not guilty" (John 19:4), presented him to them with the words that have rung through all the ages: "BEHOLD THE MAN!"

Those chief priests and officers who were there with the well-defined purpose of moving to their own end the passions of the populace, recognized the imminent importance of the moment, and with urgent voices cried aloud, *Crucify, crucify!* Still Pilate would not yield. "Take him yourselves and crucify him," he said in contempt of their impotence, weakly adding that last protest of his conscience, "for *I* (the *I* is emphatic) find no crime in him."

His words were a taunt: the Jews had no power to crucify a man. But, according to Roman custom, they could claim that their own law should be executed by the Roman power, and now they insisted on that right. They had before contemptuously refused to make a special charge against Jesus (18:30), but now they are forced to make the charge which they most dread to make (19:7). This appeal failed, because it touched Roman superstition. What Son of the gods might not indeed

be this strange Man, who through all indignities still maintained that striking majesty? Pilate had before been afraid of contravening justice; now, hearing this word he was more afraid.

Again he questioned Jesus privately, with the result that fear of condemning to death, not a good man merely, but a super-human personage, took possession of him. His resistance to the will of the Jews, which had up to this time been passive, now became active as he sought to release him (vs. 12). But the Jews perceiving why it was that the appeal to their own law had been futile, changed their tactics again, appealing to Pilate's basest fears: *If thou release this Man, thou art not Cæsar's friend.*

At these words, which called in question his loyalty, he gave over the attempt to save *this just man* (Matt. 27: 24). Though he dreaded the unknown power that so surely manifested itself in Jesus, he dreaded still more the well-defined danger into which any further effort to save him might bring himself. Causing Jesus to be brought before him, he had his judgment chair placed in the sight of the Jews, upon the mosaic pavement before the palace. They again broke forth into that loud cry, vehemently compelling by their clamor the cries of the populace, "Away, away! Crucify, crucify!" Once more came a taunting question from the governor (vs. 15). And they, sooner than acknowledge him whom their conscience must have confessed, made the deliberate disavowal of the life of Israel, of all that for centuries had kept Israel a people, the Messianic hope. *The chief priests* it, was, we are expressly told, who answered, "We have no king but Cæsar." It was the last degradation. No need for Pilate to taunt them more. His courage even to attempt the release of Jesus had long been gone. Then, therefore, he delivered him unto them to be crucified.

## CHAPTER XLI.

### THE CRUCIFIXION AND BURIAL.

Matt. 27 : 32-61 ; Mark 15 : 21-47 ; Luke 23 : 26-56 ; John 19 : 17-42.

THE place where our Lord was crucified is not certainly known. It was outside the city (Heb. 13 : 12), yet near it (John 19 : 20), on a frequented road leading into the country (Mark 15 : 21). This was in accordance with Roman custom. Though certainly not a hill, as pictures generally represent, it was a slight eminence of a rounded form, from whence came the name ; it is impossible to suppose that this was an allusion to the skulls of former executed criminals still lying there ; the Jews would not have permitted the remains of the dead to lie unburied.

It was now about nine o'clock of a warm April morning, and Jesus was led forth to be crucified. Perhaps it was by way of striking terror into the heart of the Jewish mob which had so masterfully overcome the wishes of their governor, that Pilate had given orders for the execution of two condemned robbers. The procession, therefore, consisted of three condemned men carrying the crosses on which they were to suffer, the soldiers guarding them in front and on either side, and a great crowd, constantly augmented as they passed along the streets, bringing up the rear. There were others than the rabble in the crowd now ; many of Jesus' friends were there (Luke 23 : 27), but at this stage there was no possibility of a rescue.

To one in such perfect health and with such power of self-mastery as Jesus, it mattered little that he had not tasted food since the Supper of the evening before ; but the night had been one of fearful strain on body, mind, and heart. Loving emotion, agonized conflict, taunts, insults, scourging, the

bitterness of rejection by *his own*, all had worn upon a frame as sensitive as it was perfectly organized, and now, staggering on beneath the weight of his cross, he fell to the ground, unable to go farther. A foreigner — a Jew of far-away Cyrene in Africa — came by, and the soldiers laid hands on him to share the shameful load with Jesus. Between the two robbers, Christ, the King of men, was given the position of preëminence in suffering and shame, enduring that “most cruel and base punishment,” as Cicero calls it, which was never inflicted except on slaves and the worst of criminals. It was a Jewish (not a Roman) custom to give to those who were about to undergo this dreadful death, a stupefying potion, decocted from narcotic plants, and there was a society of benevolent and wealthy women who made it their concern to see that this potion was never wanting. It was of this decoction that Jesus would not drink (Mark 15:23). He would endure, in full consciousness, all that was laid upon him.

John tells us that the superscription placed over the head of Jesus, written *in Hebrew and in Roman and in Greek*, was drawn up by Pilate himself. Perhaps he worded it in derision of the Jews, thus for the last time wreaking his revenge on them for compelling him to a course which made him despise himself. Whatever the cause, the fact remains that Jesus was thus proclaimed to all the world as King; the three languages, which typically represent religion, culture, and the social order, being, in fact, the national, the general, and the official languages.

Four soldiers would be required to perform the act of crucifixion; perhaps there were four for each cross. The clothes of the sufferers belonged by immemorial custom to the executioners. Those of Jesus they began by dividing into four parcels, casting lots, Mark tells us, *who should take what*; casting a special lot for the tunic, the inner garment, which was more costly than usual, being woven in one piece, like that of the high priest.

The excited tumult attending the act of crucifixion had subsided. As, their partition of the clothing ended, the soldiers sat and watched him, those who up to this time had with agonized hearts been beholding from afar, now drew near and stood close beside the Cross. How many women were in this company is not certain. It is most probable that there were four, and that *Mary of Clopas* (wife or daughter) was not *his mother's sister*, but that the one so called was probably Salome, the mother of Zebedee's children. And now follows one of the most precious of all revelations of the human heart of our Lord. For the last time we are admitted to that unspeakably sacred fact in his human life, his relations with his mother. We have seldom seen her since that time, in the very beginning of his ministry, when with infinite tenderness he severed the close tie which had hitherto bound them together, and called her to a still more precious fellowship, in self-renunciation (John 2:4). Now, in the moment of her bitterest pain, comes her unspeakable reward. Even in the hour when a boundless and all-embracing love was shown in the act of death for a lost world, she has her own personal part in his love. He thinks upon her, recognizes the sacred right of her motherhood, is moved not only by the knowledge that her grief is like no other grief, but also by a deep solicitude for her earthly welfare, and performs for her the last act of a true son, in providing for her future. He does it in the way that can best solace her sad heart, by placing her under the protection of the disciple whom he especially loves.

After this followed three hours of darkness and of silence, broken by one utterance of indescribable anguish (Matt. 27:45, 46). It was when this soul-agony was past that he became conscious of bodily pain, and said, *I thirst*, not as giving way to weakness, but *knowing that all things are now finished*, his ministry to the world ended. We are not told who they were who *put a sponge full of the vinegar upon hyssop and brought it to his mouth*, whether the soldiers or his friends.



Having shown by receiving the vinegar that life was not exhausted by suffering, he cried with a loud voice (Luke 23 : 46), not like that of one dying, the words, *It is finished!* They were words of triumph, of joy which it is impossible for us even to begin to understand. Finished, not only the long life of self-sacrifice, the long separation from his home in the bosom of the Father, from the glory he had with him before worlds were, but finished also the power of sin, the dominion of the evil one, the separation between men and the Father. Then, having till this time kept his head erect in token of voluntary and conscious acceptance of all that he was enduring, he bowed his head, and with the low-breathed words of joyful confidence, "Father, into thy hands I commend my spirit," he died. Not as yielding to death; death had no power over him; but as One who, having conquered death, now retires from the field of conflict.

The priests and rulers, zealous for the sanctity of the Sabbath, begged Pilate that the sufferers might be put to death and not pollute the holy day by dying and being left unburied on the Sabbath. To this Pilate consented, and the legs of the robbers were broken. But when they came to Jesus he was dead already, and piercing his side with a lance to make sure, blood and water gushed out from the wound. Two members of the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, who had probably not been summoned to the meeting which condemned him (see last Chapter), now went boldly to Pilate, begged for the body of Jesus, and receiving their request, reverently, though hastily, prepared the sacred body and laid it in Joseph's new tomb. But the Jews, remembering his words, that he would rise again on the third day, went to Pilate and begged that the stone which closed the sepulchre might be sealed and a watch set. To this Pilate curtly consented, and they sealed the stone and set their watch.

But the broken-hearted disciples and the women who loved him forgot his words and spent the Sabbath in hopeless grief.

## CHAPTER XLII.

### THE RESURRECTION MORNING.

Matt. 28 : 1-15 ; Mark 16 : 1-11 ; Luke 24 : 1-12 ; John 20 : 1-18.

IT was early on the morning of the day after the Sabbath, that Sunday which Christians love to commemorate as Easter Day, that Mary Magdalene came to the tomb, where, on the Friday evening previous, she had seen her Lord's body laid away. We know from Mark (16 : 1) and Luke (23 : 55—24 : 1) that she did not come alone, as would, indeed, not have been fitting at that early morning hour, *while it was yet dark* (John 20 : 1). These friends of Jesus were bringing the spices and ointments they had prepared, that his rest in the tomb might be the more seemly ; they had no thought of his rising. But as they went, a sudden difficulty assailed them : who would roll away the stone from the door of the tomb ? They did not know that at an earlier hour even than this there had been an earthquake, the stone had been rolled away, and the watch, terrified, had forsaken their post and fled into the city (Matt. 28 : 2, 11).

Probably Mary Magdalene's eager love led her, as the little company drew near the place, to outrun the slower pace of the elder women, so that she arrived alone at the door of the tomb. To her consternation, she found it open, the stone lifted out of the tomb, into the opening of which it had been fitted (John 20 : 1). Her first and most natural thought was to hasten to the disciples with the dreadful news that the Lord's tomb had been violated. *She runneth, therefore*, by the most direct way, to the lodgings of Peter and John, probably in another part of the city from that whence she and the women had come. It is very impressive that John, who knew of Peter's

fall, was still in fellowship with him. So we shall find also that all the ten had patience with Thomas in his doubt (see next Chapter). How far the Christian Church of to-day is from imitating their example!

John remembered always how *Peter therefore went forth, and the other disciple, and they were coming toward the tomb, but they began to run, their excitement and agitation gaining upon them as they went, and how he himself, the younger and more active of the two, ran on more quickly than Peter, and came first to the tomb.* It was not faith, but dread and dismay that winged their footsteps.

Meanwhile the other woman had gone on to the sepulchre (Mark 16 : 4-8), and looking into the tomb, they saw an angel who told them that Jesus was arisen from the dead and that they go must and tell his disciples and Peter — adding his name doubtless lest he should think himself excluded from the invitation by his denial of his Lord — that he was going before them into Galilee and they must join him there. Full of a joy that was half terror, they hastened from the sepulchre, not meeting John and Peter, who were probably running toward the sepulchre by another road.

The difference in the characters of the two men is marked by their conduct there. John, *bending forward* at the opening of the tomb, *sees the linen cloths lying*, and stands still, putting together what he now sees, with many well remembered but half understood words of his Lord; perhaps overwhelmed with grief at this new evidence that he is parted from the Master whom he loves. But Simon Peter, coming up a moment later, makes no pause for retrospect or grief, but enters precipitately into the tomb, just as, later, he plunges into the water to go to meet the Lord, the moment he learns that it is he (21 : 7).

In the tomb Peter looks with a more intent gaze than that of John, and therefore not merely *beholds the linen cloths lying*, but also is able to distinguish that *the napkin that was upon his head* is rolled up and laid away in a place by itself, a sure

evidence that the removal of the Lord's body had taken place without confusion or haste. Had the body been stolen, the grave clothes would not have been left behind, certainly not in this orderly manner.

It may very probably have been in response to an exclamation or a call of Peter that John then went into the tomb. And what he saw there poured a sudden flood of illumination upon the garnered treasures of his memory. *He believed*; not that Jesus had been stolen away, but that he had risen from the dead. It was love which became the interpreter of the facts, for *not even yet did they understand the Scripture that he must arise from the dead*. The divine necessity indicated in the word *must* had indeed been foreshadowed in all the events of our Lord's life, which showed that perfect love meant absolute self-sacrifice; but the minds of not one of the disciples had yet been open to apprehend in what way he was indeed the fulfillment and interpreter of Scripture, nor were they until the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts, ch. 2).

We do not need to be told that the two disciples had outrun Mary Magdalene, nor that she had followed after them to the tomb. They had returned home before her arrival, and she *continued standing at the tomb without, and weeping*, for as yet the thought that Christ was arisen had not occurred to her; so, as she weeps, *she bendeth forward* as John had done *into the tomb*, too full of her grief, too much concerned to recover the body of her Lord even to be surprised at the apparition of two angels clothed in white. They spoke asking her why she wept. Her answer seems to have reminded her that she must take some steps to find out what had been done with her Lord's body; she turned abruptly, and her intent gaze fell upon the figure of One standing near. She did not know that it was Jesus, not because of any change in his appearance, but simply because her mind was not prepared to recognize him. "We see only that which we have the inward power of seeing." Though she did not recognize him, she took it for granted that

he knew of whom she was thinking. Believing him to be the gardener, she naturally assumed that he was a friend; she hoped it was he, not some enemy, who had *borne him hence*, and she did not stop to measure her own strength, nor her power to take him away. If, for any reason, Joseph of Arimathea could not longer give hospitality to the precious dust, her love would see that it found a resting place.

She had not recognized his face and form, but she knew the love that spoke in his voice, as all who love him recognize him when *he calleth his own by name*. The word which she uttered, *Rabboni! My Teacher!* was doubtless the name by which she had often called him. John tells us that she said it in *Hebrew* (Revised Version), preserving thus not only the very expression that she used, but showing that this (Aramaic) was the language of intimate intercourse between Christ and his disciples.

The faulty translation of John 20:17 has been the cause of more confusion of thought than has attached to almost any other part of the description of our Lord's resurrection. *Cling not to me*, he said, "as if the time for the perfection of intercourse between us had arrived. I have already told my disciples what must be the condition of our perfect and inalienable fellowship; ye shall see me because I go unto the Father (16:16, 17). Only when I am ascended to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God, can I be always with you, with no barrier between our perfect intercourse. The flesh *must* be a barrier between us; only in the Spirit can we be really at one." His admonition to her was not, therefore, because of any peculiarity in the resurrection body, or any unreality in his appearance before his ascension. To those of a lesser faith or a less perfect love than Mary, to the other women (Matt. 28:9) and to doubting Thomas (John 20:27), he not only permitted, but invited precisely what he forbids to this dear friend. The highest honor which Jesus has to give to his own is the fellowship of his sufferings; as, long before,

he had admitted the woman who above all other women loved him most and understood him best, his mother, to the fellowship of his perfect self-abnegation, so now he calls this other deeply loving woman to that higher fellowship of faith, which leans not on the bodily presence, but enters into the blessed and inalienable communion of the Spirit.

And yet, as the flight to that high mount of privilege is a hard one for the newly-winged soul, he sets her the preliminary lesson, service: *Go and tell my brethren.* And she obeys in gladness of heart. *She cometh and telleth the disciples, I have seen the Lord; and how he had said these things unto her.* She, too, had won the victory that overcomes all sorrow — faith; by it she had won a new power of Christian living and Christian service.

## CHAPTER XLIII.

THE RESURRECTION EVENING, AND THE DOUBTING THOMAS.

Mark 16 : 12-14 ; Luke 24 : 13-43 ; John 20 : 19-25.

IT was some time on Easter day, probably, that our Lord and Simon Peter met—the forgiving Master and the humbled and repentant disciple. Of that sacred private interview we have no account, though we have more than one reference to it (Luke 24 : 34 ; 1 Cor. 15 : 5, comp. Mark 16 : 7), and we see its results both upon Peter and upon the other disciples in the leading part he afterward takes, even before the descent of the Holy Spirit (Acts 1 : 15-22).

Another most sacred interview took place, perhaps on this day, perhaps at some later time : that of Jesus with his own brother, James (1 Cor. 15 : 7). We know that before his death Christ's own brothers had not believed that his Messianic claims were well founded, or, more probably, had believed in his Messiahship but had not agreed with him as to his methods and conduct, or as to the nature of the Messiahship (John 7 : 3-5). We know that afterwards James was the head of the Jerusalem Church, and there can be little room for doubt that this private interview with his Risen Brother and Lord was the turning point in this young man's life.

It was in the afternoon of Easter Sunday that two men from the circle of Christ's disciples, though not of his Apostles, set out from Jerusalem to go to the home of one of them in a village called Emmaus, probably about eight miles to the north-west among the hills. The name of the one was Cleopas ; the name of the other is not given, and there is no ground for supposing it to be Luke, except that he alone gives an account of the incident (but comp. Mark 16 : 12, 13).

Only one thought was in their hearts, only one subject could occupy their tongues. The deep discouragement into which the arrest and crucifixion of Jesus had plunged them was only intensified by the bewildering reports of the morning, which must have been whispered about in much secrecy *for fear of the Jews* (see John 20 : 19). As now they sorrowfully talked over these things a stranger joined them, and soon with marvellous tact drew from them an account of their hopes and their grief. *We trusted that it was he that should redeem Israel*, they said, and told of the reports of visions of angels and rumors that he was alive, though as yet, so far as they knew, he had not been seen.

Then the stranger, pointing out that the suffering and death of the Messiah had long ago been announced by the prophets, went through the Scriptures, bringing out all the prophecies relating to him. As they drew near their destination, they could not bring themselves to part with this wonderful new friend. Their hearts were burning within them as he thus opened to them the Scriptures ; they ardently craved a fuller measure of the marvellous light he was pouring upon them. They urged him to go in and sup with them ; and as he blessed and broke the bread they recognized him ; it was the Lord ! And he vanished out of their sight.

Leaving their meal untouched they hastened back to Jerusalem, and there were met with the glad news, *The Lord is risen and hath appeared unto Simon!* And while they were telling the disciples of their own wonderful experiences, Jesus suddenly stood among them and said, *Peace be unto you!*

At first they were terrified, thinking it was a spirit, for the doors had been shut as a measure of precaution, and by what means he had come into their midst they knew not. To reassure them he asked for food and ate it in their sight, thus proving to them that whatever mysterious change might have passed upon his body, it was still a true body and not a mere apparition. Having thus fully put their hearts at ease, he



opened their minds that they might understand the Scriptures not, indeed, by that gift of the Holy Spirit which he had promised them, and which could not come while he was still with them, but probably by giving them that clue to their interpretation which was to be found in his own life and death and resurrection, showing them that all that had happened had been in the plan of God from the first.

Thomas, the Twin (Didymus), was not with the other Apostles that Easter evening, and when afterward they told him of this interview, he could not believe that they had not been mistaken in thinking that they had actually seen the Lord in the body. Nothing would convince him that it had not been a spectral manifestation, except to put his finger in the print of the nails and his hand into the wound in the side of Jesus. It is a strong testimony to the reality of the Christian brotherhood among the disciples that this doubt of Thomas did not weaken the bond between him and the others. It is difficult to conceive what doctrinal error could be more divisive than a doubt as to the resurrection of the Lord; and if such a doubt was not a reason for casting Thomas out of Christian fellowship, it seems hard to believe that any smaller difference of opinion can justify the step of casting out one who loves the Lord and lives in evident fellowship with him.

The reward of their tolerance came to them the next Sunday evening, when the whole number of the Apostles, including Thomas, being present and the doors again shut, Jesus once more came to them with the salutation, *Peace be unto you!* Then turning to Thomas with a gentleness which made his words the more severe rebuke of his want of faith, he bade him make the test which he himself had insisted on — to touch the wounds that had been made upon the cross, *and be not faithless but believing.* And Thomas, no longer doubting, but with all the power of his strong, though despondent nature (comp. John 11:16), aroused to adoring faith, fell down before him with the rapturous confession, *My Lord and my God!*

Yes, it was rapture to be fully persuaded by the witness of eye and touch that his Lord was indeed arisen, but there are those more blessed still—even all those who have since believed in him, through the disciples' word (John 17:20). *Because thou hast seen me thou hast believed*, the Lord said to Thomas; *blessed are they who have not seen and have believed.*

## CHAPTER XLIV.

### THE GALILEAN APPEARANCES, AND THE ASCENSION.

Matt. 28 : 16-20 ; Mark 16 : 15-20 ; Luke 24 : 44-53 ; John 20 : 30 —  
21 : 25.

THE first message of the risen Saviour to his disciples had been that they should meet him in Galilee. The feast of the Passover being fully over with that Octave of Easter Sunday on which Jesus had convinced Thomas of the reality of his resurrection (see last Chapter), they doubtless all returned thither and resumed the ordinary work which for the past year they had laid aside, waiting for a sign from Jesus as to the place and time of the expected meeting. Thus seven of the disciples (John 21 : 2) had spent a night upon the lake in fruitless toil, when at daybreak they saw one standing upon the shore. They did not recognize him, not because of anything unreal in his appearance, but because it was not yet daylight. They followed, however, his injunction to cast the net on the right side of the boat, because they believed him to be a well disposed person, who from his position could see better than they some indication of a school of fish approaching on that side. The enormous catch brought at once to John's mind the event which had been the turning point of his life (Luke 5 : 4-11), and he exclaimed, "It is the Lord!"

At the words the impetuous Peter, girding his coat about him, plunged into the sea and hastened to join the Master he so much loved. The other disciples followed, drawing their net with them, the short distance (John 21 : 8), making it possible for them to do so without the delay needed to empty the net into the boat. Arrived at the shore, they found that a fire had already been kindled (there is no reason for not conjecturing

that Peter had done this at the Lord's command), and preparations made for a morning meal.

It must have seemed like the dear, familiar intercourse of the old days, though with a new meaning. Something of awe they must have felt; none of the disciples dared to ask concerning the nature of the Lord's resurrection body. But no doubt of its reality disturbed their communion, and therefore the Lord ate, not only before them, as when he was obliged thus to dispel their doubt (Luke 24:41-43), but with them, perfect communion being made possible by unquestioning faith. They knew that a mysterious change had passed upon their Lord, but it was still verily he who sat among them and broke bread with them and ate of the fish which his own power had provided. And they knew that they, too, were changed since those past Galilean days. Surely not one of them, least of all Peter, could ever be again what they had been since the awful days of their Lord's betrayal and their own faithlessness and his death and return to them from the grave.

This *third time when Jesus was manifested to the disciples as a representative body* (his seventh or eighth appearance to one or more persons), was the proper time to reinstate the repentant, forgiven Peter to the place which had before been given to him (Matt. 16:18, 19) in the band who were to bear the Lord's commission to carry the Gospel to the world. By the thrice-repeated question, *Lovest thou me?* the Lord gently reminded him of his threefold denial; and Peter, grieved, not by that remembrance, but by the implication that doubt of his love still remained in the mind to the Lord who had forgiven him, appealed to his Master's perfect knowledge of the human heart: *Thou knowest that I love thee!* With each reply to the question Jesus had charged him, *Feed my lambs, Feed my sheep*, commissioning him to carry on his Master's work in the world. And to Peter's appeal to his knowledge of his disciple's heart, he answered giving proof that he believed that

upon his love he might rely for service unto death — even unto the same bitter and shameful death by which he himself had perfected his one offering for sin: in the words which reinstated Peter in his public trust, the Lord uttered a prophecy of the death by which he was to glorify God (John 21 : 18, 19).

After uttering this prophecy, which, perhaps, the other disciples and even Peter imperfectly understood, Jesus turned away, saying, *Follow me*. Peter obeyed, but seeing that John was also following, he asked concerning his future. Whatever may have been the motive of the question, Jesus recalled Peter to the fact that he had but one thing to concern himself with, and that was the work his Lord had given him to do (vs. 22). The disciples took this reply to mean that John should live until the Lord's second coming, but in this they misapprehended their Lord's meaning. John himself, who alone of the evangelists relates the incident, takes especial pains to correct this misapprehension, which had evidently become general in the early Church, the more so that John lived to extreme old age.

Perhaps it was at this time that Jesus made an appointment to meet all who believed on him at a certain place, and commissioned the seven here present to make the appointment known. Matthew (28 : 16–20) indeed mentions only that the eleven Apostles were present at this next meeting, but St. Paul says that there were five hundred brethren present (1 Cor. 15 : 6), appealing to the testimony of many of them, who were still alive when he wrote (A.D. 57 or 58), as to the reality of Christ's resurrection.

The place of this great meeting is not definitely mentioned; it was *a mountain*, and it was doubtless in a somewhat central and accessible part of Galilee. There is no reason why the common conjecture should not be correct, that it was the place of the Sermon on the Mount. There, not to the eleven alone, but to the whole Church, he gave his last commission, *Go ye into all the world and preach the Gospel to the whole creation;*

with the promise which made the task possible, *Lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world.*

Again in obedience to the command of Jesus, the eleven met in Jerusalem, as the feast of Pentecost was drawing nigh. There, coming to them probably in that "upper room" where they had eaten the Last Supper (comp. Luke 24 : 50 and Acts 1 : 13), he opened their minds to understand the Scripture, charging them to tarry in the city until they had received his promise — the promise of the Father (Luke 24 : 49, comp. Acts 1 : 4, 5), the endowment with power from on high.

And then he led them out of the city to the Mount of Olives, that mount whose paths he had so often traversed in going to his Judæan home in Bethany (Mark 11 : 11), the mount where he had often enjoyed quiet converse with his disciples (John 18 : 2), where, perhaps, he had sometimes passed the night (Luke 21 : 37), where he had heard the acclamations of the multitude (19 : 37), where he had wept over Jerusalem (vs. 41), where he had agonized in the garden (22 : 41-44), where he had been betrayed by the kiss of one he had loved, his own familiar friend (vs. 48). There, when they had come *over against Bethany* (24 : 50), he lifted up his hands and blessed them. And while he blessed them he was parted from them, being carried upward toward heaven (vs. 51, comp. Acts 1 : 9), until a cloud hid him from their sight. And while they stood still gazing in awe that was almost rapture, two angels stood by them, telling them that they should one day so see him return again from heaven as he was now gone into heaven (vss. 10, 11).

The question has often been raised, What manner of body was that which our Lord had on rising from the dead, which could go into heaven and return again from heaven? The progress of science since the days when the Bible was written has given us a new idea of locality and of what lies beyond our vision in the far distances. We know that in the universe there is *no up* and *down* as we understand it — that the celestial

world has none of the limitations of earth, and bears no such relation to it as is indicated in such words as above and below. But because it is a spiritual locality — because, that is, we have no words in which to describe it — is not to say that it does not exist, and so of Christ's spiritual body; we who are yet material have no experience which enables us to understand or describe the glorified body which is fitted for the spiritual life; and such was the body of Jesus after the resurrection. But we know that it was a real body, palpable to the senses, though with powers and qualities which we cannot understand or account for. It is the most stupid Philistinism to question that there are things in heaven as well as on earth undreamed of in our philosophy; there are laws divinely appointed that have not been incorporated into any system of physics yet known to us, and which, in all probability, can never be incorporated into any physical system. But we must remember that it is the things that can be so comprehended by us that are the transitory, the temporal; while it is the things unseen, that is, unknowable by our physical senses, that are the real and the eternal. We know that the body in which our Lord appeared after his resurrection is the same in which he shall again appear, the pattern of the body with which we, too, shall be clothed upon, for we are to be like him (1 John 3:2).

THE END.















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